



Senator Willie L. Mount - District 27

Louisiana Positives

Table of Contents
Hurricane Recovery
Education
Higher Education
Tourism
Economic Development
Local/Cities
Health/Hospitals
Agriculture
Government/Misc

- Home
- Biography
- Committees
- Topics of Interest
- District Map
- House Districts



HURRICANE RECOVERY

- Kerry Jeanice, an RN at West Jefferson Medical Center, is a 2006 Nation Winner for the Registered Nurse category of the Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award, one of the nation's premier nurse and healthcare honors. Jeanice earned the award for his service and commitment in the days following Hurricane Katrina. (Cherokee Uniforms, 2006)
- New Orleans community activist Stephen Bradberry received the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award on Wednesday for his work to give the poor a stronger voice in hurricane recovery. He is the first American to win the award. (AP, November 2005)

EDUCATION

- Louisiana had the greatest real increase in salaries (13.9%) for teachers in the nation between the 1994-1995 and 2004-2005 school years (Nation Education Association, November 2006).
- Louisiana ranked 11th in The State of State Standards 2006, up from 14th in 2000. The report, conducted by the Fordham Foundation, appraised the quality of statewide standards in core curricula (Fordham Foundation, August 2006).
- Louisiana's composite ACT score is 20.1, its highest average ever. The state ranks 12th in the nation for percentage of students tested (ACT Inc., 2006).
- Almost 90 percent of all Louisiana school districts improved their District Performance Scores, the third year of improvement for the state. The DPS indicates a combination of LEAP, GEE, and Iowa scores, as well as attendance and dropout rates (Louisiana DOE, March 2006).
- Louisiana's public school accountability program ranks first in the nation. The ranking praises the state's efforts in improving teacher quality (first in the nation), student performance, violence, and other factors that make up the learning environment. Only Louisiana and South Carolina received two "A" grades in accountability (Education Week, January 2006).
- Louisiana's comprehensive early childhood education program, LA4, is among the best in the nation. It has been highlighted by Georgetown University as "simply stunning" and a model initiative. The nation's premier specialist in pre-kindergarten education says Louisiana is now in the top tier of states in pre-K education, despite Louisiana's students starting later than their peers across the nation. For the 2005-2006 year, students improved from the 10th percentile to the 50th percentile in language; from the 11th percentile to the 59th percentile in print; and from the 5th to the 52nd percentile in math (Dr. Craig Ramey, Georgetown University, January 2006).
- Louisiana is 9th among all U.S. states for the number of teachers receiving a benchmark national certification in 2005. There are now 250 more educators from 44 school districts who have become National Board Certified Teachers. The state Department of Education says this is a positive indicator for student success (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, December 2005).
- Louisiana is 9th among all U.S. states for the number of teachers receiving a benchmark national certification in 2005. There are now 250 more educators from 44 school districts who have become National Board Certified Teachers. The state Department of Education says this is a positive indicator for student success (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, December 2005).
- Louisiana will receive up to \$3.6 million in private money over three years to strengthen educational leadership in the state and in local school districts. Collaboration with political leadership and the educational communities were cited as reasons Louisiana was one of only six states to receive these monies (The Wallace Foundation, November 2004).
- Louisiana's Youth Challenge Program is the best program of its kind in the nation for the second year in the row. The program targets 16 to 18-year olds who have dropped out of school, and combines classroom work, community service, physical training and team activities (United Services Organization, 2004).
- Five Baton Rouge-area teachers are among 44 teachers nationwide selected for the 2006 Disney Teaching Award highlighting creative educators. The winners will each receive \$10,000 and a 6-day trip to Disneyland, and their schools will receive \$5,000 each. The winners are: Amanda S. Mayeaux, Kathryn Lynn Pilcher and Monique D. Wild, all 8th-grade teachers at Dutchtown Middle; Felicity Amond, a 7th-grade math teacher at McKinley Middle; and Brenda Joyce Monciffe, a high school math teacher at Scotlandville High. The winners can also take advantage of a six-day professional development training. (The Advocate, May 2006)
- Baton Rouge's University High (listed as LSU Laboratory in the rankings) made the list of Top 1000 High Schools in the nation, coming in at 206th. The list is based on the number of Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate tests taken by all students in 2005 divided by the number of graduating students (Newsweek, May 2006).

HIGHER EDUCATION

- Louisiana's colleges and universities received the nation's 27th largest pot of federal funding for medical research in 2005. Tulane received \$73.3 million of the more than \$293 million allocated to the Louisiana institutions. The Tulane School of Medicine ranks 59th out of the 123 schools with such funding (National Institutes of Health, September 2006).
- Louisiana is being praised for improved efforts in enrolling, retaining and graduating college students. Louisiana set goals for all three areas, and prior to the hurricanes saw a 2 percent increase in enrollment, a 76 percent retention rate (5 percent improvement over the 2000 rate) and a 5 percent improvement in graduation rates (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, May 2006).
- A college education is more affordable in Louisiana than in the entire country of Canada and all but two other U.S. states. A study found that the combination of low tuition, the TOPS program and lots of federal aid for students makes Louisiana the third most affordable state (behind New Hampshire and Oklahoma) in which to attend college (Educational Policy Institute, April 2006).
- Xavier, Tulane, Dillard and Loyola universities are all ranked on the America's Best Colleges 2007. Tulane is ranked 44th in the Best Schools in the Nation category; Loyola and Xavier Universities ranked 4th and 29th, respectively, in the category of Best Universities – Masters in the South. Dillard ranks No. 17 in Comprehensive Colleges – Bachelors in the South (U.S. News & World Report, 2006).
- The Southern Growth Policies Board in North Carolina, which promotes enlightened economic development policies throughout the South, has singled out Louisiana Tech University in Ruston as a promising example of how university-based research might drive economic progress. Louisiana Tech researchers have developed a cost-effective way to make paper that can conduct electricity (Southern Growth Policies Board, November 2006).
- The E.J. Ourso College of Business Flores MBA Program at LSU is ranked 9th in the nation for attracting corporate MBA recruiters. (Wall Street Journal, September 2006)
- The National Endowment for the Arts, a Washington-based federal agency that promotes excellence in the arts, awarded Southeastern Louisiana Instructor and poet Alison Pelegrin a prestigious \$20,000 creative writing grant. Only about 40 creative writing fellowships from a pool of 1,300 nationwide are awarded each year (NEA, November 2006).
- Betty Kleen, an information-systems professor at Nicholls State University, recently received the Computer Educator of the Year Award from the International Association for Computer Information Systems. The award is one of the highest the international organization gives, and recognizes research and teaching skills, significant contributions to information systems and work throughout the industry (International Association for Computer Information Systems, November 2006).
- A Southeastern Louisiana University film on Manchac Swamp has been selected to compete for Best Overall film honors at the New York International Film Festival. The film is produced by the University's Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, and details the historical degradation of the swamp (The Advocate, August 2006).
- Dr. Sally Clausen is being recognized as one of the most entrepreneurial college presidents in the United States for her success in improving teacher certification standards and presiding over major financial and academic turnarounds at two universities (Inside Higher Ed, August 2005).
- LSUHSC graduate Bradley Davis is recognized as an outstanding student in audiology. He developed a "hearing loss simulator" to help parents "hear" how their voice sounds to a hearing-impaired child. He has given scholarly talks to many professional groups. He won several grants and fellowships, and plans to pursue a doctoral degree (LSUHSC, August 2005).
- UNO assistant professor Marc Rosenblum was awarded an International Affairs Fellowship for his work in international policy. As one of the 12 people to receive the award, he will work with the White House, National Security Council and Congressional immigration subcommittees (Council on Foreign Relations, 2005-2006).

TOURISM

- Before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf Coast, Louisiana's state parks saw a 4.6 percent increase in visitors in FY 2004-2005, the fourth year in a row the number increased (CRT, August 2005).
- Tourist visiting Louisiana spent \$500 million more than the previous year (LA CRT, 2004 vs. 2003).
- Set decorator and New Orleans native Gretchen Rau was part of the team that won the Oscar for art direction for "Memoirs of a Geisha." She was previously nominated for "The Last Samurai." (March 2006).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Film production in Louisiana has boomed since 2000, going from \$20 million that year to \$640 million in 2005. The state predicts film production will bring in \$700 million next year (Baton Rouge Business Report, November 2006).
- Louisiana ranked 17th in states with best business climates. The ranking was based 50 percent on a survey of corporate site selectors and 50 percent on other factors, including new and/or expanded projects and new plant performance (Site Selection, November 2006).
- Louisiana's worldwide merchandise exports resumed their strong growth in the first three quarters of 2006 and are headed for a record-breaking year. The state's total export value reached \$16.2 billion for the Jan.-Sept. 2006 period, a 16.2 percent increase from the year before. This increase outpaces U.S. export growth of 14.4 percent (World Trade Center, November 2006).
- The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development earned two national awards from the National Partnership for Highway Quality for its evacuation plans that helped more than 1 million people leave the New Orleans area before Hurricane Katrina (NPHQ, November 2006).
- New York-based Fitch ratings has upgraded Louisiana's Rating Outlook on general obligation bonds to "stable" from "negative" and affirmed the state's "A"

rating on \$2.4 billion in existing Gulf Opportunity Zone bonds. The improved rating reflects the positive financial developments in the state since the rating was downgraded from A+ to A in December 2005, following the hurricanes Katrina and Rita (Fitch Ratings, August 2006).

- Louisiana is the No. 1 state in which to make a movie outside of California, according to P3 Production Update magazine, which uses industry responses to determine state's friendliness to the industry (The Advocate, August 2006).
- Louisiana climbed from 8th to 4th in the May 2006 Update of Top 20 States for Industrial Project Spending Activity. Louisiana climbed the list because of 13 new projects totaling more than half a billion dollars (Industrialinfo.com, May 2006).
- Louisiana is 8th in the nation for Industrial Project Development with \$6.37 billion in total investment value in 242 projects. The analysis is based on projects scheduled to begin construction in 2006 (Industrialinfo.com, February 2006).
- The Louisiana Economic Development organization has won accreditation from the International Economic Development Council. To become accredited, LED had to demonstrate adherence to commonly held standards in the profession (July 2006).
- Before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Louisiana was ranked 6th in the nation in growth of small businesses. This was a 5% increase from previous years and was attributed to Louisiana's user-friendly business environment (US Census Bureau 2004).
- From 2000 until Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck in 2005, Louisiana added 7,245 businesses, even though the U.S. lost 300,000 businesses during the same period. The 4.1 percent increase in businesses was exceptional for Louisiana, which ranked 27th in the nation (InfoUSA, 2000-2004).
- December 2006 will mark the busiest month for cruise ship calls in the history of the Port of New Orleans. Throughout the month, the port received 23 cruise ship calls by seven cruise ships, bringing a record 95,000 passengers through New Orleans (New Orleans CityBusiness, December 2006).
- Three Louisiana cities rank as Hot Midsize Cities for Entrepreneurs in the U.S.: Baton Rouge is ranked 16th, Lafayette 22nd, and Shreveport-Bossier comes in at 43rd (Entrepreneur 2006).
- The Acadiana Economic Development Council took top honors at the Annual Synchronist Users' Forum in Chicago, IL. AEDC ranked first among more than 450 national economic development organizations for its efforts to retain existing employers across the region (Synchronist Users' Forum, November 2006).
- A national site-location magazine has given New Orleans the top spot in a listing of 40 metropolitan markets for businesses to consider relocating to. Reasons for the ranking include availability of state and federal resources, a reasonable cost of living, a stable, middle-class labor force and low wages (Expansion Management Magazine, November 2006).
- Rapides Parish made the list of Top 10 Counties for Industrial Project Spending, tied for 7th based on first quarter 2006 update of projects scheduled to begin construction in 2006 (Industrialinfo.com, April 2006).
- New Iberia ties for 20th on the latest list of Top Micropolitan Area Awards. The awards and rankings honor those communities of 50,000 or fewer people for their ability to secure new and expanded corporate facility projects. New Iberia garnered six to earn the ranking (Site Selection Magazine, March 2006).
- Marathon Oil has announced plans to build a refinery in Garyville, LA. The new plant will create 250 new permanent jobs and provide 2,000 construction jobs (WAFB, November 2006).
- Jeld-Wen, Inc., an Oregon-based window and door manufacturer announced plans to build an \$85 million materials plant in Winn Parish that will employ 75 people. It is the biggest investment the company, which employs over 20,000 people worldwide, has made in a single facility (nola.com, November 2006).
- Formosa Plastics Corporation announced a \$100 million expansion of the company's Baton Rouge plant. According to company officials, Gulf Opportunity Zone incentives made expansion in Louisiana the most attractive choice for their business (LED, November 2006).
- Coe and Company of Metairie was one of two runners-up in the latest list of small business awards. The awards celebrate entrepreneurs who are using technology in innovative ways to grow their businesses. Diamond Date of New Orleans was named as an Outsourcing Finalist for the awards (PC Magazine, October 2006).
- Mezzo Technologies is the winner of the annual Tibbetts Award for the nation's most productive technology company. The company was founded by Dr. Kevin Kelly, an LSU faculty member and entrepreneur. The company got its start in the Louisiana Business & Technology Center of the E.J. Ourso College of Business at LSU, which itself was named the 2005 National Business Incubator of the Year. (Small Business Innovation Research Program/U.S. Small Business Administration, September 2006).
- Baton Rouge-based Amedisys Inc. ranks 7th on Fortune magazine's annual "100 Fastest-Growing Companies" list, the only home health company to make the list (The Advocate, September 2006).
- Synfuel, Inc. has announced plans to build a major coal gasification plant in Ascension Parish. The total capital investment once the project is complete is expected to be more than \$5 billion, and will use lignite from the northern part of the state as raw material to produce gasoline, ethanol, synthetic gas, electricity, steam and methanol (LED, June 2006).
- Plaquemine's Shintech is named in the list of Top 10 Deals of 2005 in North America. The rankings are based on total capital investment, number of jobs, regional economic impact, value of jobs and speed to market, among other things. Global Energy of North America in St. Gabriel ranks 3rd; Shreveport's Steelscape is named as an honorable mention (Site Selection Magazine, 2006).
- The Tulane-based Hancock Horizon Burkenroad fund was featured on Kiplinger.com in a story praising the small fund for its returns – 16 percent on average over the past three years. The fund, which invests mainly in small Louisiana companies, has grown from \$12 million a year ago to \$22 million. Student analysts at Tulane help fund manager David Lundgren Jr. pick the stocks (September 2006).
- Apogen Technologies, a Top 10 homeland security contractor, has been awarded four contracts for hurricane recovery. It has been named a best place to work (CityBusiness, Washington Business Journal, August 2006).
- Venture capital firm Advantage Capital of New Orleans is a top 100 firm for both

first-time funding to companies as well as later-stage companies (Entrepreneur magazine, July 2006).

- St. Charles Parish's Valero Energy Corporation is ranked 3rd on the list of 100 Best Companies to Work For (Fortune Magazine, January 2006).
- Dryades Savings Bank of New Orleans is the eighteenth-largest black-owned bank in the United States (BE Banks, 2006).
- Baton Rouge-based Amedisys came in at 55th on the 200 Best Small Companies List, PetroQuest Energy is ranked 137th (Forbes, November 2005).

LOCAL/CITIES

- The Baton Rouge Area Foundation climbed once again in the ranks of community foundations. The Foundation is 21st in gifts received, 48th in grants paid, and 24th in market value (Columbus Foundation, October 2006).
- New Orleans made the list of America's Top 10 Most Walkable Cities (AAA, August 2006).
- The Jefferson Parish Chamber of Commerce is being recognized as a four-star chamber for its effective organizational procedures and outstanding contribution to positive change in the parish, despite setbacks after Hurricane Katrina (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2006).
- Baton Rouge jumped 66 spots to No. 19 on the Most Unwired Cities Survey, measuring the number of commercial and public places where wireless Internet service is available. New Orleans comes in at No. 38 (Intel, June 2005).
- Baton Rouge's Shaw Center for the Arts has been named Best Multi-Purpose Arts Building based on its architectural design, putting it on the list of The World's 12 Best new Buildings (Artinfo.com, January 2006).
- Baton Rouge was featured in the New York Times travel section as a great tourist destination for parents traveling with children. The half-page feature was titled "On the Banks of the Mississippi, Where the Kingfish Lived." (NYTimes, March 2005).
- In Natchitoches, Alligator Park, noted for its well-organized fun nature exhibits, and Merci Beaucoup Restaurant with its Cajun baked potato and bread pudding specialties, both placed as "Local Secrets, Big Finds" in an Internet poll (Travelocity, 2005).

HEALTH/HOSPITALS

- Louisiana's electronic system for tracking childhood immunizations, the Louisiana Immunization Network for Kids Statewide (LINKS), has received the highest award from the American Immunization Registry Association for its excellent service during Hurricane Katrina. The LINKS staff worked tirelessly to make sure the data in their system was available to registries around the country. This enabled children to start school and avoid the pain of unnecessary vaccinations (American Immunization Registry Association, March 2006).
- Louisiana's childhood immunization rate is up to 32nd nationally, after the past two years of 46th and 49th, respectively (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 2006).
- Louisiana's colleges and universities received the nation's 27th largest pot of federal funding for medical research in 2005. Tulane received \$73.3 million of the more than \$293 million allocated to the Louisiana institutions. The Tulane School of Medicine ranks 59th out of the 123 schools with such funding (National Institutes of Health, September 2006).
- LSU's nine charity hospitals have received the 2006 "Safety Net Award" for their performance during Hurricane Katrina. The award recognizes the dedication, service and heroism displayed by the staff of the hospitals (National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems, 2006).
- Louisiana is one of only seven states deemed to be prepared to distribute drugs and other emergency supplies from a federal stockpile. The designation is part of a survey that finds Louisiana among the top 21 states in planning for disease, disaster and bioterror attacks (Trust for America's Health, December 2005).
- Louisiana's CommunityCARE Program, which links Medicaid recipients to primary-care physicians, program was recognized as a top program for the efforts it made in improving routine, well-child care visits to identify children with disabilities at an earlier age (Center for Health Care Strategies, August 2005).
- Louisiana's illegal (under 18) tobacco sales are just over 7 percent, one of the three lowest rates in the nation (DHH/Office of Addictive Disorders, August 2005).
- MD Technologies and its website received the Silver Award in the Best Community Benefit Communications category in eHealthcare Strategy & Trends' seventh annual eHealthcare Leadership Awards. MD Technologies was chosen from among 1,100 other entries nationwide. The website was initially designed just after hurricane Katrina to help displaced patients locate their physicians and is now continuing to help patients and physicians reconnect and rebuild through its statewide physician registry (Strategic Health Care Communications, November 2006).

AGRICULTURE

- Louisiana's farmers help Louisiana place very high in the nation in:

Harvested Acres

- No. 1 in sugar
- No. 2 in rice and sweet potatoes
- No. 9 in cotton and sorghum

Crop Production:

- No. 1 in crawfish
 - No. 2 in sweet potatoes and sugar
 - No. 2 in rice
 - No. 20th in sorghum
 - No. 9 in cotton
- (Louisiana Agricultural Statistics 2005)

GOVERNMENT/MISC

- R. King Milling received the 2006 National Conservation Special Achievement Award from the national Wildlife Federation for his work in helping to restore Louisiana's wetlands (National Wildlife Federation, November 2006).
- Louisiana ranked to 7th on the list of most generous states, as measured by the amount its citizens give to charity. This comes even as Louisiana is 46nd in earnings of its citizens (Catalogue for Philanthropy, November 2006).
- Baton Rouge blues musician Henry Gray is being honored as one of only 11 recipients of the 2006 National Heritage Fellowships. The award is the nation's highest honor in folk and traditional arts, and is based on artistic excellence, cultural authenticity and contributions to the field. Gray will receive \$20,000 in addition to the honor. Also receiving the award is the Treme Brass Band from New Orleans. (National Endowment for the Arts, June 2006).
- The New Orleans Times-Picayune won two Pulitzer Prizes for meritorious public service for its coverage of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. The prizes are journalism's most prestigious honor (Times-Picayune, April 2006).
- Louisiana ranks with the top states for providing open government. A study shows that Louisiana, along with four other states, provide the public the best access to government records (University of Florida, March 2006).
- Keith Thibodeaux, chief information officer for Lafayette Consolidated Government, is one of the top 100 information technology leaders in the nation. His work collaborating with other governmental and nongovernmental entities earned him the honors (Computerworld, December 2005).
- Louisiana's Office of Alcohol & Tobacco Control has been named the 2005 Liquor Law Enforcement Agency of the Year. The agency achieved over a 91% compliance rate after conducting more than 1,300 compliance checks (National Liquor Law Enforcement Association, October 2005).
- Louisiana's Governor's Office of Film & Television Development made the list of Top 50 Executives and Creatives who had an impact on the independent film industry last year (Variety, September 2005).

PREPARED BY THE SENATE COMMUNICATION OFFICE FOR:

District 27 State Senator Willie Mount
 P. O. Box 3004, Lake Charles, LA 70602
 Phone (337) 491-2016 Fax (337) 433-8080
lasen27@legis.state.la.us

Updated December 11, 2006

Questions and comments may be directed to websen@legis.state.la.us.
 Baton Rouge, Louisiana.