



NEWS RELEASE

LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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House leaders seek to solve budget problems

BATON ROUGE – With higher education and health care on the brink of suffering devastating cuts, leaders in the state House of Representatives have assembled a package of bills aimed at not only solving the state’s current financial problems but also setting the state on a more financially sound course for future years.

“The recent news of LSU’s contingency budget planning is hard evidence that we have to establish a stable and sustainable method for funding higher education,” said Speaker of the House Chuck Kleckley, R-Lake Charles. “I have been conferring with House members and our colleagues in the Senate to develop options and build consensus.

“I am asking the members of the House to do what is necessary to protect our colleges and universities,” he said. “These are difficult times, but we owe it to our students and our state's future economy to invest in higher education. It’s vital to our ability to move forward and progress.”

Protecting higher education and healthcare is a primary goal in the budget reform package, Kleckley said. “We have to try to solve the problem without placing higher education in jeopardy.”

Rep. Joel Robideaux, R-Lafayette, said it’s up to the Legislature to act. Robideaux is chairman of the Ways and Means Committee that will first consider the package of bills,

“I am convinced that any budget solution will have to be legislatively driven,” he said. “The only way we can succeed is for all us here in the Legislature to work together; House and Senate, regardless of party, race, gender or political ambition.”

Robideaux said the state has approved numerous business tax exemptions aimed at luring business and industries to the state with the goal of stimulating the state economy.

“Over the last eight years, we’ve invested a significant amount of the state’s operating revenue in new tax incentives with the expectation that these incentives would grow the private sector economy and thus provide government with additional the revenue that comes from private sector growth,” Robideaux told the committee today.

“Eight years are behind us and we are still waiting for the incentives to work as we planned. For eight years we’ve made cuts to agencies, healthcare and higher education,” he said. “We’ve cobbled together budgets using various forms of one-time money, all in an effort to avoid the type of draconian cuts healthcare and higher education are facing today.”

Robideaux said Ways and Means will meet before and after sessions of the full House to tackle bills in the package.

“Our constituents sent us here to represent them,” he told the committee. “Making difficult and unpopular decisions is included in that representation. Whether we are term-limited, running for re-election, running for some other office, or running for President of the United States, our job is to do what is best for the people of Louisiana. Nothing else matters.”

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