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**CONTACT: REP. PERRY**  
**225.342.0349**

### **ACADIANA DELEGATION ISSUES 2009 SESSION REVIEW**

**BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA**—The Acadiana Delegation announces a recap from the 2009 Regular Session.

The 2009 Session proved to be a very challenging and contentious session for the Legislature. No single district or region across the state was spared from a decline in state-supported funding, including the Acadiana region.

With the state facing a decline of \$1.3 billion in state general fund dollars for fiscal year 2009-10, due in large part to the national recession and lower oil and gas prices, budget cuts to government-provided initiatives, services, and programs were imminent. The Legislature was tasked with balancing spending priorities with less funding, while making difficult budget reductions to many deserving and worthwhile causes.

Much of the latter half of the 2009 Regular Session was dominated by intense and passionate budget discussion and negotiations between the House and Senate. The debate centered around three key issues: the level of cuts to higher education and healthcare, the delay of state income tax breaks for taxpayers, and the amount of monies to be withdrawn from the Budget Stabilization Fund (rainy day fund).

Ultimately, each chamber comprised in an effort to minimize the severity of proposed budget reductions. When the dust settled, the Legislature voted to draw down \$86 million from the Budget Stabilization Fund (rainy day fund) to restore some funding to higher education and healthcare.

Commented Representative Perry (Kaplan), “Anytime you fall upon hard economic times, budget cuts are never an easy thing to do. Fortunately, both sides were able to come to an agreement on the budget and ease the cuts to higher ed and healthcare, both important priorities for our constituents back home. Aside from the budget, members of the Acadiana Delegation worked hard this session on issues dealing with the agriculture, oil and gas, and seafood industries.”

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## Acadiana Delegation Legislative Review

### **Below are highlights from the recently completed 2009 Regular Session:**

- Members of the Delegation stood firm in its support for the agriculture industry. Several members pushed to restore funding to the Ag Centers to a level that would not adversely impact our farmers, as well as the production and processing of our state's crops and food sources.
- Members of the Delegation helped to defeat attempts to strip portions of \$300 million in funding dedicated for the purposes of coastal restoration and protections along the coastal parishes.
- Members of the Delegation were instrumental in defeating legislation, which would have memorialized Congress to make "English" the official language. This legislation would have been detrimental to the Louisiana citizens of Cajun and French ancestry and heritage and adversely impacted CODOFIL's bid for the 2014 Congrès Mondial Acadien.
- Members of the Delegation strongly backed legislation put forth by the oil and gas industry, which encourages new and innovative production of natural resources.

### **Below is legislation with favorable impact on the Acadiana region and residents:**

- HB765 (Constitutional Amendment) proposes increasing the maximum amount of the severance tax collected on natural resources, other than sulphur, lignite, and timber which is remitted to the parish governing authority where the severance occurs from \$850,000 to \$1,850,000 in FY 2011-2012 and \$2,850,000 in FY 2012-2013, effective July 1, 2011.
- HB2 provided \$17.5 million for I-49 South in Lafayette.
- HB333 limits separate homeowner's insurance deductibles, which apply to damage resulting from a named storm or hurricane, including hurricane, named-storm, and wind and hail deductibles, to being applied on an annual basis beginning January, 2010.
- HB551 creates a public safety campaign to warn people about the risks of consuming Chinese seafood products. This legislation encourages retailers to warn customers about possible contamination of Chinese seafood products.
- HB 439 and HB 551 requires the country of origin labeling on all catfish and crawfish products.
- HB185 would prohibit insurers from refusing to issue an automobile insurance policy providing collision or comprehensive coverage on a newly purchased

motor vehicle to one of the insurer's existing automobile policyholder who is an otherwise qualified purchaser based solely on an impending named tropical storm or hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico.

- HB5 provides that the exemption for bait and feed used in the production or harvesting of crawfish shall be applicable, operable, and effective from July 1, 2009, notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary.
- HB840 requires each parish to create an advisory committee on emergency management.
- HB97 (**ACT52**) repealed legislation from 2009, which excludes from the definition of "motorboat" documented commercial fishing vessels by the U.S. Bureau of Customs. This Act also provides a credit towards any license issued by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to an owner of a commercial vessel of Aug. 15, 2008, who paid a state numbering application fee for that vessel. The credit shall expire on Dec. 31, 2010.