

House Committee on Appropriations

Minutes of Meeting
2016 First Extraordinary Session
February 18, 2016

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Cameron Henry, Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. in Room 5, in the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The secretary called the roll.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Cameron Henry, Chairman
Representative Mark Abraham
Representative Beryl A. Amedée
Representative Tony Bacala
Representative Lawrence A. "Larry" Bagley
Representative John A. Berthelot
Representative Robert E. Billiot
Representative Gary M. Carter, Jr.
Representative Charles R. Chaney
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Franklin J. Foil, Vice Chairman
Representative Lance Harris
Representative Valarie Hodges
Representative Jack G. McFarland
Representative Blake Miguez
Representative Dustin Miller
Representative Steve E. Pylant
Representative Jerome Richard
Representative John M. Schroder, Sr.
Representative Patricia Haynes Smith
Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative James K. Armes, III
Representative Walt Leger, III
Representative Scott M. Simon

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Penny B. Bouquet, Administrative Secretary
Mr. Peter G. E. Conroy, Legislative Analyst
Ms. Nancy Keaton, Legislative Analyst

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

None

III. DISCUSSION OF LEGISLATION**IV. OTHER BUSINESS****Department of State**

Mr. Blake Ruiz, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-7477, gave an overview and discussed the FY15-16 and FY16-17 budgets for the Department of State.

Mr. Tom Schedler, Secretary of State and Kyle Ardoin, First Assistant Secretary of State, 8585 Archives Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (225) 922-2880, also gave an overview and discussed the FY15-16 and FY16-17 budgets for the department, and the cost and potential consolidation of local voter precincts in Louisiana.

Secretary Schedler discussed, with Representative McFarland and Representative Smith, the department's outreach efforts and new technological systems that are currently trending in the United States. He also explained the differences between Louisiana's current voting system and the voting system that the state will require in later years, and the cost associated with the new technology.

Secretary Schedler discussed, with Representative Bagley, the impact of the FY16-17 budget reductions on state museums, and plans to return operations of certain museums to local government.

Secretary Schedler discussed, with Representative Bacala and Representative Harris, the efficiencies that have been implemented by the department to absorb potential FY15-16 and FY16-17 budget reductions.

Department of Justice

Mr. Peter Conroy, Legislative Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-7477, gave an overview and discussed the FY15-16 and FY16-17 budgets for the Department of Justice.

Attorney General Jeff Landry, 1885 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 326-6079, gave introductory remarks to the committee and an overview of the cost savings measures the department has taken in preparation for a potential FY15-16 budget reduction. He also gave a comparison of the number of attorneys in the Department of Justice versus the Executive Department, and explained the role of the Attorney General.

Ms. Liz Murrill, Civil Division Director for the Attorney General's Office, 1885 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 326-6079, discussed, with Representative Zeringue, cost savings measures that could be realized by utilizing the Department of Justice and reducing the number of attorneys in other state agencies, and the number of contracts with outside counsel attorneys.

Mr. Wilbur "Bill" Stiles, Chief Deputy Attorney General, 1885 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 326-6079, and Attorney General Landry discussed, with Representative Schroder, the debt collection efforts of the Department of Justice over the past ten years and measures that the department is taking to prevent fraud in state government.

Attorney General Landry gave Representative Miguez a breakdown of some of the efficiencies that have been made to reduce wasteful spending within the department, and also gave a time line for the move to the offices in Bensen Towers in New Orleans.

Ms. Murrill addressed Representative Smith's question regarding the statewide efficiencies study and discussed, with Representative Billiot, state contracts for legal services to help with debt collections.

Attorney General Landry and Ms. Murrill discussed, with Representative Bacala, the impact of the FY15-16 budget reductions in the Department of Justice.

Attorney General Landry and Mr. Stiles discussed, with Representative Miller, importance of the Medicaid Fraud Unit and the efficiencies that can be made within the unit.

Attorney General Landry and Ms. Murrill gave a breakdown of the primary functions of each division of the Department of Justice to Representative Pylant.

Mr. Stiles discussed, with Representative Chaney, the comparison of salaries for the new Department of Justice administration versus the previous administration.

Attorney General Landry and Mr. Stiles discussed, with Representative Bagley and Representative Chaney, the efforts to reduce the duplicity of services within all state agencies and the Department of Justice.

Mr. Jay Dardenne, Commissioner of Administration, 1201 North Third Street, Suite 7-210, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7000, addressed the committee regarding the Attorney General's move

into the Bensen Towers in New Orleans. He also addressed the issue regarding the number of attorneys in state agencies versus the number of attorneys in the Attorney General's office.

Lieutenant Governor and Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Mr. Mark Antoon, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-2412, gave an overview and discussed the FY15-16 and FY16-17 budgets for the Lieutenant Governor and the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

Lt. Governor William "Billy" Nungesser, 1051 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7009, gave introductory remarks to the committee and an overview of the cost savings measures the department has taken in preparation for a potential FY15-16 budget reduction.

Mr. Robert Barham, Assistant Secretary for the Office of State Parks, P.O. Box 44426, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-8111, discussed, with Representative Chaney, the continued funding of Poverty Point World Heritage site.

Lieutenant Governor Nungesser discussed, with Representative Carter, ways to generate funds for the state and local libraries.

The meeting recessed at 11:57 a.m. and reconvened at 1:09 p.m.

Department of Treasury

Mr. Chris Henry, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-1394, gave an overview and discussed the FY15-16 and FY16-17 budgets for the Department of Treasury.

Treasurer John N. Kennedy, 900 North Third Street, Third Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-0010, and Commissioner Dardenne, addressed the committee regarding issues with the content on the LaTrac website.

Treasurer Kennedy discussed Medicaid fraud, with Representative Bacala and Representative Smith, and discussed his views on the state's consulting contracts that he considers to be wasteful spending.

Commissioner Dardenne discussed, with Representative Miguez and Representative Schroder, his plan to reduce the contracts he considers to be wasteful spending.

Mr. Chris Keaton, Deputy Director of the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-1964, and Treasurer Kennedy commented on Act 87 from the 2015 Regular Session.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Chas Nichols, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-2444, gave an overview and discussed the FY15-16 and FY16-17 budgets for the Department of Veterans Affairs (LDVA).

Mr. Joey Strickland, Secretary of LDVA, P.O. Box 94095, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 219-5000, gave introductory remarks to the committee and an overview of the impact the FY15-16 and FY16-17 budgets will have on the department. He also discussed, with Representative Bacala and Representative Carter, the effects of budget reductions on the service men and women in the state.

Secretary Strickland discussed, with Representative Chaney, the Northeast Louisiana Veterans Cemetery in Rayville.

Commissioner Dardenne explained the return of \$5.1 million from the department's FY15-16 budget to the State's General Fund.

Public Service Commission

Mr. Blake Ruiz, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-0474, gave an overview and discussed the FY15-16 budget for the Public Service Commission.

Ms. Eve Gonzalez, Executive Secretary of the Public Service Commission, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (225) 342-4404, gave introductory remarks to the committee and an overview of FY 15-16 budget for the commission.

Department of Agriculture and Forestry

Mr. Chas Nichols, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-2444, gave an overview and discussed the FY15-16 and FY16-17 budgets for the Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

Dr. Mike Strain, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 922-1234, gave an overview of the department from 2008 to 2016, and discussed the FY15-16 and FY16-17 budgets for the department. (See Exhibit A)

Commissioner Strain discussed, with Representative McFarland, the reductions to the Forest Productivity Fund and Forest Protection Fund.

He also discussed, with Representative Amedée, the various training and equipment that is involved in controlling and putting out a forest fire.

Commissioner Strain discussed, with Representative Zeringue, the effects of budget reductions on the department, and discussed statutory dedications and the amount of federal fund match associated with those statutory dedications with Representative Abraham.

Department of Insurance

Mr. Peter Conroy, Legislative Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-6292, gave an overview and discussed the FY15-16 for the department.

Mr. James J. Donelon, Commissioner of Insurance, 1702 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-5900, gave introductory remarks to the committee and an overview of FY15-16 budget for the department.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Cameron Henry
House Committee on Appropriations