

**House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on General Government**

Minutes of Meeting
2017 Regular Session
March 29, 2017

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Blake Miguez, Chairman of the Subcommittee on General Government, called the meeting to order at 10:37 a.m. in Room 5, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The secretary called the roll.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Blake Miguez, Chairman
Representative Beryl A. Amedée
Representative James K. Armes, III
Representative Lawrence A. "Larry" Bagley
Representative Valarie Hodges

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Katie Andress, Secretary
Chas Nichols, Budget Analyst

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Representative Robert E. Billiot
Representative Charles R. Chaney
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Lance Harris
Representative Jerome Richard
Representative John M. Schroder, Sr.
Faye Talbot, Sergeant at Arms
Vivian Hurst, Sergeant at Arms

III. DISCUSSION

House Bill No. 1 by Representative Henry

The following agencies contained in House Bill No. 1 were presented and discussed:

Department of State

Mr. Blake Ruiz, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA, 70804, (225) 342-0474, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY17-18 budget.

Secretary Tom Schedler, Department of State, 8585 Archives Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (225) 922-2880, discussed the efficiencies that have been implemented in preparation for FY17-18 budget reductions.

Secretary Schedler discussed reducing the number of special elections each year, the benefits of the GeauxBIZ and GeauxVote portals, and the department's outreach efforts with Representative Miguez.

Secretary Schedler discussed the negative effects of voting online and the safeguards in place to protect confidential voter information with Representative Bagley. He also discussed the total cost of elections with Representative Billiot.

Secretary Schedler discussed the total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions for the department, the percentage of fees and self-generated revenue collected from state museums, and the return on investment from the George Rodrigue Blue Dog stickers with Representative Amedée.

Secretary Schedler discussed the cost associated with holding a special election and his plans to return operation of certain museums to local government with Representative Schroder.

Department of Justice

Mr. Peter Conroy, Legislative Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA, 70804, (225) 342-6292, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY17-18 budget.

Mr. Wilbur "Bill" Stiles, Chief Deputy Attorney General, 1885 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 326-6079, presented an overview of the functions of the department and the cost savings measures that have been implemented in preparation for budget reductions.

Ms. Liz Murrill, Director of Administrative Services, Department of Justice, 1885 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 326-6079, presented an overview of the department's budget history and the FY17-18 budget request. (See Exhibit A)

Ms. Murrill and Mr. Stiles discussed the department's self-generated revenue, the Legal Support Fund, the return on investment from expanding the Medicaid Fraud Unit, and the increase in salaries and related benefits in FY17-18 with Representative Miguez.

Mr. Stiles gave Representative Bagley examples of Medicaid fraud cases that are investigated. He and Ms. Murrill also discussed the interaction between the Department of Justice and the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) in Medicaid fraud investigations with Representative Bagley.

Mr. Stiles discussed, with Representative Schroder, the department's efforts to improve communication between the department, the Legislative Auditor, and LDH, in order to prevent Medicaid fraud.

Ms. Murrill and Mr. Stiles discussed the decline in the department's risk litigation cases and the department's involvement in debt recovery with Representative Schroder.

Mr. Stiles discussed Medicaid recipient fraud with Representative Hodges.

Department of Treasury

Mr. Chris Henry, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-1394, presented an overview and discussed the FY17-18 budget for the department.

Treasurer Ron Henson, 900 North Third Street, Third Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-0010, discussed the department's FY17-18 budget.

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, presented an overview of the department and discussed the FY17-18 budget.

Mr. Dane Morgan, Assistant Commissioner of Management and Finance, Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 952-8142, discussed the efficiencies the department made in preparation for budget reductions. He also discussed potential trade opportunities between Louisiana and Cuba with Representative Chaney.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the FY17-18 budget for the department.

Mr. Homer F. Rodgers, Undersecretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-5000, gave an update on the improvements in the quality of service provided to those living in the state's veterans' homes, capital outlay requests, and funding received from local municipalities with Representative Miguez.

Mr. Rodgers discussed the need for an additional auditor at the Northeast Louisiana War Veterans Home with Representative Chaney.

Department of Civil Service

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the department's FY17-18 budget.

Mr. Byron P. Decoteau, Jr., Director of the Department of Civil Service, 1201 North Third Street, Suite 3-280, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-8272, gave the committee an update on the state's overall workforce, state agency turnover rates, and the department's plan to realign the pay scale for classified state employees.

Mr. Decoteau discussed the timing of merit increases for classified state employees, recommendations for performance adjustments in FY17-18, and the number of employee layoffs in state government with Representative Miguez.

Mr. Chris Deer, Deputy Director of the Department of Civil Service, 1201 North Third Street, Suite 3-280, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-9424, discussed the funding source for performance adjustments and the services that state employees provide with Representative Miguez.

Mr. Deer discussed the salary difference between state employees and employees in the private sector and the state's investment in employees who leave for better paying jobs with Representative Bagley.

Mr. Decoteau and Mr. Deer discussed finding the balance between state employee and private sector salaries and that the benefits for state employees are no longer as attractive to potential employees as they were in prior years with Representative Amedée.

Mr. Deer and Mr. Decoteau discussed the potential cost savings of the department's new pay plan with Representative Chaney.

Mr. Decoteau and Mr. Deer discussed ways in which state employees receive pay increases during a hiring freeze and how the department calculates the turnover rate in state government with Representative Harris.

Municipal Fire and Police Civil Service

Mr. Nichols presented an overview of the agency and discussed the FY17-18 budget.

Mr. Robert S. Lawrence, State Examiner, 8550 United Plaza Boulevard, Suite 901, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (225) 925-4400, discussed the technological needs of the agency and the FY17-18 budget.

Mr. Lawrence discussed the agency's office space, rental agreement, and the functions of the agency with Representative Miguez.

Ethics Administration

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the FY17-18 budget for the agency.

Ms. Kathleen Allen, Ethics Administrator for the Louisiana Board of Ethics, P.O. Box 4368, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (225) 219-5600, discussed how the agency prepared for mid-year budget reductions, the agency's trending growth (since FY09), and the services provided by the agency with Representative Miguez.

Ms. Allen discussed the one-time funding request for the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws conference in FY16-17 with Representative Amedée.

Representatives Amedée and Miguez commended Ms. Allen for the outstanding customer service provided by the agency.

State Police Commission

Mr. Nichols presented an overview of the commission and discussed the FY17-18 budget.

Mr. Jason Hannaman, Executive Director of the State Police Commission, P.O. Box 66555, Baton Rouge, LA 70896, (225) 925-7057, addressed the committee regarding his career in state government.

Mr. Hannaman discussed salary increases within the commission and potentially adding an additional T.O. position with Representative Miguez.

Mr. Thomas "T.J." Doss, Chairman of the State Police Commission, P.O. Box 66555, Baton Rouge, LA 70896, (225) 925-7007, discussed the commission's legal contracts with Representative Miguez.

Board of Tax Appeals

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the board's FY17-18 budget.

Judge Tony Graphia, Chairman, and Mr. Cade Cole, Vice Chairman of the Board of Tax Appeals, no contact information provided, discussed the board's functions and the FY17-18 budget with Representative Miguez.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Representative Miguez announced that the Department of Revenue would appear before the subcommittee on April 11, 2017, to discuss the FY17-18 budget and the governor's proposed tax plan.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Miguez offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 5 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Miguez, Amedée, Armes, Bagley, and Hodges voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Blake Miguez
Subcommittee on General Government