

House Committee on Appropriations

Minutes of Meeting
2018 Regular Session
March 19, 2018

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Cameron Henry, Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, called the meeting to order at 9:34 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 Reid Falconer
Representative Franklin J. Foil, Vice Chairman
Representative Lance Harris
Representative Bob Hensgens
Representative Walt Leger, III
Representative Jack G. McFarland
Representative Blake Miguez
Representative Dustin Miller
Representative Jerome Richard
Representative Scott M. Simon
Representative Patricia Haynes Smith
Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative James K. Armes, III
Representative Valarie Hodges

Representative Steve E. Pylant

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Katie Address, Secretary
Mr. Peter G. E. Conroy, Legislative Analyst
Ms. Talisha Lee, Legislative Analyst

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Ms. Vivian Hurst, Sergeant at Arms
Ms. Faye Talbot, 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 Insurance

Mr. Peter G. E. Conroy, Legislative Analyst, House Fiscal Division (HFD), 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-6292, presented an overview and discussed the FY 18-19 budget for the department.

Commissioner Jim Donelon, Department of Insurance, 1702 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-7275, discussed the types of statutory dedications the department has and the Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) with Representatives Abraham and Amedée, respectively.

Mr. Lance Herrin, Assistant Commissioner, Department of Insurance, 1702 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, discussed the department's funded vacancies with Representative Amedée.

Commissioner Donelon discussed the effects of the Trump Administration's suggested policy on certain insurance requirements with Representative Amedée.

Commissioner Donelon and Mr. Herrin discussed the department's self-generated revenue and insurance rate increases with Representatives Bacala, Leger, Miller, and Smith.

Department of Justice

Mr. Conroy presented an overview and discussed the department's FY18-19 budget.

Ms. Lynnel Ruckert, Chief of Staff, and Ms. Melissa Gannuch, Director of Administrative Services, Department of Justice, 1885 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 326-6079, discussed significant expenditure changes within the department and the Risk Litigation Section of the department with Representative Leger.

Mr. Conroy discussed the reduction to the Civil Law Program, and Ms. Gannuch discussed grant programs within the department's Other Charges expenditure category with Representative Smith.

Ms. Gannuch discussed the department's Medicaid Fraud Unit and the cost of cases involved in the opioid crisis with Representative Henry.

Department of Agriculture and Forestry

Ms. Jamie Tairov, Budget Analyst, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-0474, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY18-19 budget.

Dr. Mike Strain, Commissioner, and Mr. Dane Morgan, Assistant Commissioner of Management and Finance, Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 922-1234, discussed funded vacancies and fees and self-generated revenue with Representative Bacala.

Commissioner Strain and Mr. Morgan discussed the bond indebtedness of the Boll Weevil Program with Representative Smith. The commissioner also discussed the department's ability to fight fires with Representative Chaney.

The meeting recessed at 11:58 a.m. and reconvened at 1:25 p.m.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Chas Nichols, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2444, presented an overview and discussed the FY18-19 budget for the department.

Mr. Nichols discussed the implementation of the State Civil Service pay plan with Representative Edmonds.

Colonel Joey Strickland, Secretary, and Mr. Homer Rodgers, Undersecretary, Department of Veterans Affairs, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-5000, discussed the reduction of beds in the Louisiana War Veterans Home in Jackson, LA, the pharmaceutical services within the state's veterans' homes, and deferred maintenance costs associated with the homes with Representative Amedée.

Colonel Strickland discussed the Troops to Teachers Program and certain special programs for female veterans with Representative Smith.

Ms. Stephanie Wade, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-5018, discussed the department's salaries and related benefits with Representatives Bacala and Miguez.

Department of Revenue

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the department's FY18-19 budget.

Ms. Kimberly L. Robinson, Secretary, and Mr. Clarence Lymon, Undersecretary, Department of Revenue, 617 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-4059, discussed fees collected by the Office of Debt Recovery and historical self-generated revenue with Representatives Henry and Edmonds.

Mr. Lymon and Secretary Robinson discussed the department's personnel costs and the actual amount of state general fund spent in FY17-18 with Representative Bacala.

Secretary Robinson reported an update on the status of internet sales tax collections in Louisiana to Representative Foil.

Department of Environmental Quality

Ms. Tairov presented an overview and discussed the FY18-19 budget for the department.

Ms. Karen Andrews, Undersecretary for the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), P.O. Box 4303, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (225) 219-3845, discussed the acquisitions and the department's major repair needs with Representative Zeringue.

Ms. Andrews discussed funded Table of Organization (T.O.) positions within the department with Representatives McFarland and Zeringue.

Ms. Andrews and Ms. Theresa Delafosse, Accountant Administrator, DEQ, P.O. Box 4303, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (225) 219-3322, discussed the Waste Tire Management Program with Representative McFarland.

Department of Corrections

Mr. Mark Antoon, Budget Analyst, House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2412, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY18-19 budget.

Secretary Jimmy LeBlanc, Department of Corrections, 504 Mayflower Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (225) 342-6740, and Mr. Darrel Vannoy, Warden of Louisiana State Penitentiary, 17544 Tunica Trace, Angola, LA 70712, (225) 655-2928, discussed the need for a special entrance pay rate for corrections officers and employee turn-over rates with the committee.

Secretary LeBlanc provided a handout, Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records.

Representative Kenneth E. Havard, District 62, P.O. Box 217, Jackson, LA 70748, (225) 634-7470, discussed the cost savings of Justice Reinvestment with Representative Bagley.

Secretary LeBlanc addressed the committee regarding the effects of FY18-19 budget reductions on the department.

Mr. Thomas Bickham, Undersecretary, Department of Corrections, 504 Mayflower Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (225) 342-6740, discussed the cost of housing inmates in local housing with Representative Chaney.

Witness cards submitted by individuals who did not speak are as follows: 2 for information only.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Chaney offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 22 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Henry, Abraham, Amedée, Bacala, Bagley, Berthelot, Billiot, Carter, Chaney, Edmonds, Falconer, Foil, Harris, Hensgens, Leger, McFarland, Miguez, Miller, Richard, Simon, Smith, and Zeringue voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Cameron Henry
House Committee on Appropriations