

House Committee on Appropriations

Minutes of Meeting
2020 Regular Session
March 3, 2020

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. in Room 5, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The committee administrative assistant called the roll.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman
Representative Roy Daryl Adams
Representative Tony Bacala
Representative Lawrence A. "Larry" Bagley, interim member
Representative R. Dewith Carrier
Representative Gary M. Carter, Jr., vice chairman
Representative Raymond J. Crews
Representative Daryl Andrew Deshotel
Representative Mary DuBuisson
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Aimee Adatto Freeman
Representative Lance Harris
Representative John R. Illg, Jr.
Representative Frederick Douglass Jones
Representative Timothy P. Kerner
Representative Rodney Lyons
Representative Tanner D. Magee
Representative Jack G. McFarland
Representative Dustin Miller
Representative Blake Miguez
Representative Troy D. Romero
Representative Francis C. Thompson
Representative Christopher Turner
Representative William "Bill" Wheat, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Barbara W. Carpenter
Representative Valarie Hodges, interim member
Representative C. Denise Marcelle

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Katie Andress, committee administrative assistant
Stephanie Little, attorney
Amanda Trapp, legislative analyst

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Faye Talbot, sergeant at arms

III. BUSINESS**House Bill No. 105 by Representative Zeringue**

The following agencies contained in House Bill No. 105 were presented and discussed:

Executive Department**Executive Office**

Mr. Chas Nichols, budget analyst, House Fiscal Division (HFD), 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2444, presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for the executive office.

Ms. Desireé Honoré Thomas, assistant commissioner, Division of Administration (DOA), 1201 North Third Street, Suite 7-210, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7000, discussed the office's travel expenses and personnel information with Representative Bacala.

Ms. Thomas and Mr. Nichols also discussed expenditures within the other charges category with Representative Deshotel.

Mr. Nichols and Ms. Thomas discussed the differences between Table of Organization (T.O.) positions, non-T.O. positions, and Full-time equivalent (FTE) positions with Representative Edmonds. Ms. Thomas and Mr. J. Travis McIlwain, director, Office of Planning and Budget, 1201 North Third Street, Suite 7-150, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7005, also discussed funding for those positions and the performance based budgeting process with Representative Edmonds.

Mr. McIlwain discussed expenditure trends in retirement and employee related benefits with Representative Wheat.

Ms. Thomas and Mr. McIlwain discussed merit increases for certain employees in the executive office with Representative Carter.

Mr. Nichols and Ms. Thomas discussed expenditure trends in the executive department's salaries and related benefits and certain interagency transfers with Representative Crews.

Ms. Thomas and Mr. Pat Forbes, executive director, Office of Community Development, 617 North Third Street, 6th Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-9600, discussed the department's excess federal budget authority for emergency funding due to the 2016 floods and the Restore Louisiana Program with Representative Thompson.

Ms. Thomas discussed the governor's transition costs expenditure category with Representative Zeringue. Ms. Thomas also discussed trends in the executive office's other charges expenditure category and salaries for unfilled vacancies with Representative Bacala.

Mr. McIlwain discussed the state's budgeting process and interagency transfers with Representative Bacala.

Office of Indian Affairs

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Office of the Inspector General

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for the agency.

Mr. Stephen Street, state inspector general, Office of Inspector General, 602 North Fifth Street, Suite 602, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-4262, provided information regarding the role of the inspector general and discussed the types of services provided.

Mr. Street discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget and the return on investment to the state general fund as a result of the Office of Inspector General. Mr. Street also discussed the differences between the Office of Inspector General, the Legislative Auditor, and the Attorney General with Representative Crews.

Mr. Street and Mr. Nichols discussed the agency's increase in salary and related benefits with Representative Edmonds.

Mr. Street discussed the agency's recovery efforts compared to other states with Representatives Freeman and Romero. Mr. Street also discussed funding for unfilled forensic auditor positions with Representative Freeman.

Mr. Street and Mr. Nichols discussed expenditure trends within the agency's other charges category with Representative Deshotel.

Mr. Street discussed the process to investigate certain cases within the agency with Representative Wheat.

Mr. Street also discussed employee demographics with Representative Jones and discussed State Civil Service merit increase recommendations and salary increases for unclassified employees within the agency with Representative Miller.

Mr. Street discussed with Representative DuBuisson the possibility of appointing an inspector general in St. Tammany Parish.

Mr. Street discussed the agency's return on investment to the state general fund with Representative Lyons.

Mental Health Advocacy Service

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Mr. Joseph Seyler, director, Mental Health Advocacy Service, 627 North Fourth Street, Suite I-322, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-6659, addressed the committee regarding some of the agency's functions.

Mr. Nichols discussed the agency's statutory dedications with Representative Edmonds.

Mr. Seyler discussed the functions of the agency and funding for Hope House in Covington with Representative DuBuisson and discussed the merits of the state's child advocacy program with Representative Kerner.

Mr. Seyler provided statistical information regarding the number of cases the agency handles per year and the number of attorneys employed by the agency to Representatives Bacala, Deshotel, and Lyons.

Ms. Honoré discussed the cost of technology services with Representative Deshotel.

Mr. Seyler discussed the adequate amount of funding needed for the agency and the need for more outpatient psychiatric services with Representative Carrier.

Mr. Seyler discussed the state's funding for child advocacy services compared to other states with Representative Thompson. Mr. Seyler also discussed funding for child advocacy services in certain parts of the state with Representative Jones.

Representative Gary Carter in the chair.

Ms. Thomas, Mr. Nichols, and Mr. Seyler discussed projected expenditure trends in salary and related benefits for FY 19-20 and FY 20-21 with Representative Bacala.

Mr. Seyler discussed certain types of court representation for children in Jefferson Parish with Representative Kerner.

Louisiana Tax Commission

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the commission's FY 20-21 budget.

Mr. Michael Matherne, administrator, Louisiana Tax Commission, 1051 North Third Street, #2, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-0339, addressed the committee regarding the oversight to the 64 elected, individual parish assessors, as well as oversight of taxpayers property values; to conduct bi-annual, state-wide studies for residential and commercial properties, and report those findings to assessors in order to ensure fair property values.

Mr. Rajesh Tani, Louisiana Tax Commission, 1051 North Third Street, #2, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-0339, discussed projected tax fee increases with Representative Carter.

Representative Zeringue in the chair.

Mr. Matherne discussed the consequences for incorrect property tax assessments with Representative Bacala.

Mr. Matherne provided statistical information regarding property tax assessments appeals and discussed the types of unfilled vacancies within the commission with Representative Freeman.

Mr. Matherne discussed the commission's technology services costs with Representative Deshotel.

Mr. Nichols discussed expenditure trends for salary and related benefits with Representative Carter.

Division of Administration

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for the division.

Ms. Thomas, Mr. McIlwain, and Mr. Nichols discussed expenditure trends for employee salaries and related benefits with Representatives Zeringue and Edmonds.

Mr. Neal Underwood, deputy chief information officer, Office of Technology Services, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7105, provided Representative Bacala with an update on the full implementation of Louisiana Checkbook.

Mr. McIlwain and Mr. Underwood discussed the total cost of implementation of the LaGov System with Representative Bacala.

Ms. Thomas discussed the division's excess federal budget authority with Representative Bacala. Mr. McIlwain and Commissioner Jay Dardenne, DOA, 1201 North Third Street, Suite 7-210, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7000, also discussed the purpose of state agency's budgeted excess budget authority with Representative Bacala.

Commissioner Dardenne provided information and a timeline regarding the full implementation of the LaGov System and Louisiana Checkbook with Representative Bacala.

Mr. Nichols, Ms. Thomas, Mr. Forbes discussed certain carry-forward funding within the division with Representatives Bacala and Thompson.

Ms. Thomas discussed certain revenue in the division's other charges category with Representative Wheat.

Commissioner Dardenne discussed expenditures and the cost of maintaining state-owned buildings with Representative Wheat.

Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA)

Mr. Chris Henry, budget analyst, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1394, presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Mr. Bren Haase, executive director, CPRA, 150 Terrace Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7308, discussed certain state cost share obligations with Representative Zeringue.

Representative Kerner made a request for CPRA to look into certain projects in his district.

Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP)

Mr. Henry presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for the agency.

Representative Edmonds in the chair.

Mr. James Waskom, director, and Ms. Christina Dayries, assistant deputy director, GOHSEP, 7667 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 925-7345, addressed the committee regarding the agency's FY 20-21 budget and discussed disaster relief payments to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with Representative Miller.

Mr. Waskom discussed the cost savings of disaster mitigation efforts with Representative Kerner.

Ms. Dayries and Mr. Waskom discussed the cost and consolidation of technology services through the Office of Technology Services with Representative Deshotel.

Representative Zeringue in the chair.

Military Affairs

Mr. Henry presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for Military Affairs.

Brigadier General Keith Waddell, adjutant general, Louisiana National Guard, 6400 St. Claude Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70117, (318) 416-7534, addressed the committee regarding the national guard's mission and the department's FY 20-21 budget.

Colonel Kenneth Paul, director of educational programs, Louisiana Youth Challenge Program, 505 F Street, Pineville, LA 71360, (318) 641-5800, discussed the functions of the state's youth challenge programs and maximum number of students accepted per cycle with Representative Lyons.

Brigadier General Waddell, Colonel Paul, and Representative Lyons discussed the agency's efforts to increase the Job Corps Program throughout the state.

Brigadier General Waddell and Colonel Paul provided statistical information regarding the success rate of the youth challenge program and recruitment of graduating students into military service to Representative Romero.

Representative Thompson took a personal privilege to acknowledge and thank the Louisiana National Guard for its service.

Colonel Paul discussed age requirements for entrance into the youth challenge program with Representative Jones.

Brigadier General Waddell discussed the Star Program with Representative Wheat.

Brigadier General Waddell discussed the agency's cyber security response efforts throughout the state with Representative Freeman.

Louisiana Public Defender Board

Mr. Henry presented an overview and discussed the board's FY 20-21 budget.

Mr. Rémy Starns, state public defender, Louisiana Public Defender Board, 301 Main Street, Suite 700, Baton Rouge, LA 70825, (225) 219-9305, addressed the committee regarding the board's sources of funding and the importance of state general funds to operate the program.

Mr. Starns discussed the board's fees and self-generated revenue and the cost of capital defense teams to defend capital cases with Representatives Magee and Miller.

Mr. Starns discussed the factors to determine salaries for public defenders and the average caseload for public defenders within the state with Representative Miller.

Mr. Starns discussed the process and cost to defend capital cases in Louisiana with Representative Bacala.

Mr. Starns discussed the board's restricted services protocol and the process to appoint public defenders with Representative Magee.

Mr. Starns also discussed the allocation of funds to local public defender districts with Representatives Lyons, Miguez, and Romero.

Mr. Starns and Dr. Tiffany Simpson, Louisiana Public Defender Board, 301 Main Street, Suite 700, Baton Rouge, LA 70825, (225) 219-9305, discussed the collection rate of fees and self-generated revenue and ways to improve the collection rate with Representative Miguez.

Mr. Starns discussed the need for adequate and stable funding for the board with Representative Jones and Lyons.

Mr. Starns discussed the oversight process for the determination of indigent defense and issues regarding the shortage of certified capital defense attorneys with Representative Bacala.

Mr. Henry discussed the board's means of finance swaps with Representative DuBuisson.

Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District (LSED)

Mr. Henry presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Mr. Evan Holmes, Director of Business Operations, SMG New Orleans, 1500 Sugar Bowl Drive, New Orleans, LA 70112, (504) 587-3913, addressed the committee regarding the functions of the district and certain sources of funding within the FY 20-21 budget.

Mr. Henry and Mr. Holmes discussed the agency's fees and statutory dedications with Representative Crews.

Mr. Holmes provided an explanation and comparison of the district's sources of revenue and expenditures to Representative Thompson. Mr. Holmes and Ms. Hilary Hurst Landry, LSED board member, 1010 Common Street, Suite 2050, New Orleans, LA 70112, (504) 388-3032, also discussed the use of certain vacant sports facilities with Representatives Illg and Thompson.

Mr. Holmes and Ms. Landry discussed the management of the Mercedes-Benz Superdome and LSED board member demographics with Representative Thompson.

Mr. Holmes discussed funding for renovations of the Mercedes-Benz Superdome with Representative Freeman.

Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement

Mr. Henry presented an overview and discussed the commission's FY 20-21 budget.

Representative Magee in the chair.

Mr. Jim Craft, executive director, Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE), 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1560, explained the purpose of the Crime Victim Assistance Formula Grant Program to Representative Carrier and discussed the evaluation process for programs provided by the agency with Representative Crews.

Representative Zeringue in the chair.

Mr. Craft discussed certain pre-adjudicated issues with local juvenile offenders, the cost to house juvenile offenders, and the commission's oversight of the state's truancy program with Representative Miller.

Mr. Craft and Ms. Denise Hernandez, account administrator, LCLE, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1560, discussed increases in interagency transfer funds and funds within the other charges category with Representatives Zeringue and DuBuisson.

Mr. Craft discussed the commission's use of Justice Reinvestment (JRI) funds for certain programs with Representative Freeman.

Representative Kerner took a personal privilege to recognize the commission's work to assist sexual assault victims.

Representative Zeringue made an announcement regarding the order of the day.

Office of Elderly Affairs

Mr. Henry presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Speaker Schexnayder took a personal privilege to acknowledge a former legislator.

Ms. Danielle Stafford, deputy assistant secretary, Office of Elderly Affairs, P.O. Box 61, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (225) 342-7100, and Mr. Henry discussed the amount of funding for additional T.O. positions and merit increases with Representative Carter. Ms. Stafford also discussed the types of services provided by the agency with Representative Carter.

Ms. Stafford discussed the impact of a budget reduction on certain councils on aging with Representative Carter.

Ms. Thomas and Mr. McIlwain discussed the justification for certain budget increases compared to budget reductions to senior centers with Representative Carter.

Ms. Stafford discussed the claw back of additional funding received by certain councils on aging not expended in FY 19-20 with Representative Carter.

Ms. Patricia Jones, executive director, Allen Council on Aging, 602 East Fifth Avenue, Oakdale, LA 71463, (318) 335-3195, Ms. Darlene C. Schexnayder, executive director, Ascension Council on Aging, P.O. Box 412, Donaldsonville, LA 70346, (225) 473-3789, and Ms. Becky Bergeron, executive director, Pointe Coupee Council on Aging, P.O. Box 110, New Roads, LA 70760, (225) 638-4402, discussed the impact of budget reductions to councils on aging in rural parishes with Representative Bacala.

Ms. Stafford discussed the parish council on aging funding formula with Representatives McFarland and Romero.

Representative Carrier took a personal privilege to acknowledge the work of the Allen Parish Council on Aging.

Ms. Stafford discussed the types of cases assigned to the elderly protective services unit with Representative McFarland.

Representative Wheat took a personal privilege to acknowledge the work of the Tangipahoa Council on Aging.

Representative Thompson took a personal privilege to acknowledge the work of all councils on aging throughout the state.

Ms. Thomas addressed the committee regarding budgetary trends within the agency. Ms. Stafford also addressed the committee regarding other sources of funding for local councils on aging.

Louisiana Racing Commission

Mr. Henry presented an overview and discussed the commission's FY 20-21 budget.

Mr. Charles Gardiner, executive director, Louisiana Racing Commission, 320 North Carrollton Avenue, Suite 2-B, New Orleans, LA 70119, (504) 483-4000, addressed the committee regarding the commission's FY 20-21 budget.

Office of Financial Institutions

Mr. Henry presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for the agency.

Commissioner John Ducrest, Office of Financial Institutions, 8660 United Plaza Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (225) 922-2627, addressed the committee regarding the agency's efforts to fill vacant positions and discussed the agency's fees and self-generated revenue with Representative Crews.

Mr. Henry and Mr. McIlwain discussed funding for related benefits for agency employees with Representative Crews.

Commissioner Ducrest discussed the agency's turnover rate with Representative Freeman.

Ancillary Appropriations

Office of Group Benefits

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Mr. Tommy Teague, chief executive officer, Office of Group Benefits, P.O. Box 44036, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-9670, addressed the committee regarding the need for additional funding and the potential increase in insurance premiums. Mr. Teague also discussed the amount necessary to maintain a healthy fund balance with Representative Zeringue.

Mr. Teague, Mr. McIlwain, and Ms. Thomas discussed group insurance rate adjustments for active employees and related benefits within the Office of Financial Institutions with Representative Bacala.

Mr. Patrick Goldsmith, director, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2440, and Mr. McIlwain discussed the agency's budgeting process for FY 19 actual expenditures and FY 20 projections with Representative Bacala.

Office of Risk Management

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for the agency.

Ms. Melissa Harris, director, Office of Risk Management, P.O. Box 91106, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (225) 342-6331, addressed the committee regarding the agency's functions and services.

Ms. Harris discussed outstanding state liabilities and funding for litigation with Representative Crews. Ms. Vickie Aaron, chief financial officer, Office of Risk Management, P.O. Box 91106, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (225) 342-6031, discussed the agency's carry-forwards with Representative Crews.

Ms. Harris discussed the types of liability claims covered by the agency with Representative Wheat.

Mr. Nichols discussed payments for certain judgements with Representative Wheat.

Ms. Thomas and Mr. Nichols discussed the privatization and consolidation of the Office of Risk Management with Representative Freeman.

Louisiana Property Assistance Agency

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Ms. Thomas discussed the types of items that are considered surplus with Representative Crews.

Federal Property Assistance Agency

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Prison Enterprises

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for Prison Enterprises.

Office of Technology Services

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Mr. Underwood addressed the committee regarding the agency's functions and the services provided. Mr. Underwood also discussed the increase in the agency's other charges category, the procurement process for services, and access to broadband in rural areas with Representative Deshotel.

Mr. Underwood discussed certain issues within a recent legislative auditor's performance report with Representatives Deshotel and Freeman. Mr. Underwood also discussed the department's efforts to increase cybersecurity throughout all state agencies with Representative Freeman.

Mr. Underwood discussed action necessary to provide increased technology to rural areas of the states with Representative Thompson.

Mr. Underwood discussed the agency's participation in oversight and implementation of the integrated eligibility system project with Representative Bacala. Mr. Underwood also discussed the impact of restructuring the procurement of technology services to state agencies with Representative Crews.

Division of Administrative Law

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Ms. Emalie Boyce, director, Division of Administrative Law, 1020 Florida Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1800, provided the committee with information regarding the agency's functions.

Office of State Procurement

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the agency's FY 20-21 budget.

Ms. Paula Tregue, director, Office of State Procurement, 1201 North Third Street, Suite 2-180, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-3793, provided information regarding the agency's self-generated revenue to the committee.

Mr. Jonathan Walker, assistant director, Office of State Procurement, 1201 North Third Street, Suite 2-180, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1038, discussed the status of implementation of vendor demographics requirements within Act 589 from the 2016 Regular Session with Representative Carter.

Mr. Walker discussed the agency's fees and self-generated revenue with Representative Deshotel.

Mr. Walker and Ms. Tregue discussed expenditure trends in the agency's other charges and operating services categories with Representative Romero.

Mr. Nichols discussed increases in salary and related benefits with Representative Romero.

Office of Aircraft Services

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the Office of Aircraft Services' FY 20-21 budget. Ms. Thomas discussed the state's use of airplanes with Representative Crews and discussed the agency's interagency transfers with Representative Wheat.

Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for the fund.

Ms. Sierra Trabeau, program manager, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-3871, and Mr. McIlwain discussed the services provided by and administration of the fund with Representative Freeman. Ms. Trabeau also discussed the need for additional state general fund with Representative Crews.

Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the FY 20-21 budget for the fund. Mr. Nichols also discussed the continuing need for fund with Representative Crews.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There are no announcements.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Gary Carter offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 13 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Zeringue, Bacala, Carrier, Gary Carter, Crews, Deshotel, Freeman, Jones, Lyons, Romero, Thompson, Turner, and Wheat voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Jerome "Zee" Zeringue
House Committee on Appropriations