

House Committee on Appropriations

Minutes of Meeting
2022 Regular Session
March 9, 2022

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. in Room 5, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman
Representative Tony Bacala
Representative Barbara W. Carpenter
Representative R. Dewith Carrier
Representative Daryl Andrew Deshotel
Representative Mary DuBuisson
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Aimee Adatto Freeman
Representative Jason Hughes
Representative John R. Illg, Jr.
Representative Timothy P. Kerner
Representative Rodney Lyons
Representative C. Denise Marcelle
Representative Jack G. McFarland
Representative Blake Miguez
Representative Troy D. Romero
Representative Francis C. Thompson, vice chairman
Representative Debbie Villio
Representative William "Bill" Wheat, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Lawrence A. "Larry" Bagley, interim member
Representative Raymond J. Crews
Representative Brett F. Geymann
Representative Valarie Hodges, interim member
Representative Dustin Miller
Representative Christopher Turner

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dazia Briscoe, committee administrative assistant
Stephanie Little, attorney
Chris Henry, budget analyst
David Lehman, budget analyst
Jamie Tairov, budget analyst

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Faye Talbot, sergeant at arms

III. BUSINESS**Discussion of the FY 22-23 Budget for:****Office of the Lieutenant Governor**

Mr. David Lehman, budget analyst, House Fiscal Division (HFD), 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9101, presented an overview and discussed the FY 22-23 budget for the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

Before questions, Mr. Lehman proceeded to the next presentation.

Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Mr. Lehman presented an overview and discussed the FY 22-23 budget for the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

Lieutenant Governor William "Billy" Nungesser, commissioner, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (CRT), 1051 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7009, presented opening comments to the committee. In his remarks, Lt. Nungesser discussed interagency transfers from tourism revenue, the department's request for additional positions, marking plan initiatives, the return on investment for the Louisiana float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, sponsorships with universities, the seafood industry, and the twelve new cultural districts.

Lt. Nungesser discussed contributing factors that led to increased in profits in state parks, preservation and conservation efforts to create a sportsman paradise in the state, and efforts to preserve critical habitats with Representative Zeringue.

Lt. Nungesser discussed the Louisiana alligator float that appeared in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade with Representative Carrier.

Representative Thompson in the chair.

Lt. Nungesser discussed Keep Louisiana Beautiful, plans to maintain the increase of garbage cans alongside the roads, and the shared responsibility to empty garbage cans with Representative Illg.

Mr. Brandon Burris, assistant secretary, Office of State Parks, 1051 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (504) 982-6595, discussed the change in state park hours, gate locks, and collected fees that addressed the issue of people entering after-hours with Representative Illg.

Lt. Nungesser discussed the safety of seafood coming into the state, the Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board oversight, the percentage of state inspected seafood, and promotion efforts for coastal Louisiana with Representative Kerner.

Lt. Nungesser and Mr. Doug Bourgeois, assistant secretary, Office of Tourism, 1051 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-8125, discussed the Encore Louisiana Commission and the responsibility of airport marketing with Representative Carpenter.

Mr. Burris and Ms. Nancy Watkins, undersecretary, CRT, 1051 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-8201, discussed the under-collected statutory dedication from the Louisiana State Parks Improvement and Repair Fund, lost revenue due to storms, and the department's excess budget authority with Representative McFarland.

Lt. Nungesser discussed public-private partnerships to increase revenue at state parks with Representative McFarland.

Representative Thompson expressed interest in coordinating site visits for the committee to tour state parks.

Lt. Nungesser discussed the use of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) dollars to build permanent infrastructure in state parks to serve residents affected by disasters with Representative Romero.

Lt. Nungesser and Mr. Bourgeois discussed the Louisiana Music Ambassador Program that provides grants to support the music economy with Representative DuBuisson.

Lt. Nungesser and Mr. Burris discussed the promotion of traveling exhibits and grant opportunities for state parks through the Recreational Trails Program for Louisiana (RTPL) and the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) with Representative DuBuisson.

Lt. Nungesser and Mr. Bourgeois discussed grant opportunities for local fairs, festivals, and attractions with Representative DuBuisson.

Mr. Burris discussed the funding and maintenance of Fort Derussy State Historic Site in Marksville, LA, with Representative Deshotel.

Lt. Nungesser discussed the responsibility and funding plan for the Keep Louisiana Beautiful program with Representative Lyons.

Mr. Burris discussed the public-private partnership with Tentrr to provide "glamping" sites within state parks with Representative Villio.

Representative Wheat expressed his appreciation for the department's efforts to maintain fairs and festivals in Louisiana.

Dept. 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 FY 22-23 budget for the Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

Commissioner Mike Strain, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF), 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 522-1233, presented opening comments to the committee. In his remarks, Commissioner Strain discussed the issue of inflationary costs, progressive energy policies, the use of infrastructure dollars for dredging, and plans for a fuel tank farm.

Commissioner Strain discussed industrial hemp and medical marijuana funding and oversight with Representative Thompson.

Commissioner Strain discussed the number of firefighters per acre, the Wildfire Suppression Subfund, and factors that contributed to the decrease in fires in the state with Representative Carrier.

Commissioner Strain discussed the anticipated budget for an increase of testing for medical marijuana oversight within the Agriculture & Environmental Science program with Representative Villio.

Commissioner Strain discussed the department's State General Fund appropriation request, the affected dedicated programs, and the lack of profit returned on medical marijuana and industrial hemp with Representative McFarland.

Ms. Tairov discussed the dollars redirected to the Community and Family Support System Fund with Representative McFarland.

Commissioner Strain discussed the lack of slaughter plants in Louisiana and the cost of medical marijuana and industrial hemp testing with Representative Romero.

Commissioner Strain discussed his role in the defense against biological warfare agents and the portion of the budget dedicated to such efforts with Representative Wheat.

Dept. of Insurance

Mr. Lehman presented an overview and discussed the FY 22-23 budget for the Department of Insurance.

Representative Bacala in the chair.

Commissioner Jim Donelon, Department of Insurance (LDI), 1702 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-7275, presented opening comments to the committee. In his remarks, Commissioner Donelon discussed the economic effects of hurricane season, the loss of homeowner insurance companies due to insolvency, the withdrawal of insurance companies from the Louisiana market, and policyholder complaints.

Chairman Zeringue in the chair.

Commissioner Donelon discussed the additional funding approved by the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget (JLCB) to increase awareness, the public service announcements to inform the public of the department's complaint services and mediation program, and the availability of supplemental claims with Representative Zeringue.

Ms. Denise Gardner, chief of staff, LDI, P.O. Box 94214, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-9189, discussed the dedicated phone bank and additional staff the department hired using the BA-7 funds approved by JLCB with Representative Zeringue.

Commissioner Donelon discussed Risk Rating 2.0, which limited rate increases not to exceed 18% annually, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), and the issue of insurance companies paying premiums directly to banks instead of homeowners with Representative Zeringue.

Commissioner Donelon discussed the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, premium rate increases for wind and fire policies, and the property insurance market with Representative Kerner.

Commissioner Donelon discussed the most common reasons for claim denials and the process for mitigating conflicts with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and wind coverage with Representative Wheat.

Commissioner Donelon discussed the auditing reports for market conduct exams with Representative Romero.

Dept. of Revenue

Mr. Chris Henry, budget analyst, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1394, presented an overview and discussed the FY 22-23 budget for the Department of Revenue.

Secretary Kevin Richard, Department of Revenue (LDR), 617 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-4059, presented opening comments to the committee.

Secretary Richard discussed the system change for how self-generated revenue would be utilized by the Tax Collection Program in compliance with Act 348 of the 2020 Regular Session and the excess budget authority request for FY 23 with Representative Zeringue.

Mr. Ernest Legier, commissioner, Louisiana Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control (ATC), 7979 Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 954-0178, discussed the interagency transfer from the Office of the Governor to ATC for the enforcement, education, and training related to human trafficking laws with Representative DuBuisson.

Secretary Richard and Mr. Henry discussed year-to-date spending for FY 22 and the amount of self-generated revenue the department anticipated to spend with Representative Bacala.

Mr. Luke Morris, deputy secretary, LDR, 617 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802 (985) 662-8411, discussed the cost of funding the Board of Tax Appeals, adjudication procedures, revenue collections, and the possibility of reducing the claim limit threshold for filing fees with Representative Zeringue.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Persons who do not feel comfortable giving testimony in person at this time may submit a prepared statement in lieu of appearing before the committee:

A. Any interested person or any committee member may file with the committee a prepared statement concerning a specific instrument or matter under consideration by the committee or concerning any matter within the committee's scope of authority, and the committee records shall reflect receipt of such statement and the date and time thereof.

B. Any person who files a prepared statement which contains data or statistical information shall include in such prepared statement sufficient information to identify the source of the data or statistical information.

For the purposes of this Paragraph, the term "source" shall mean a publication, website, person, or other source from which the data or statistical information contained in the prepared statement was obtained by the person or persons who prepared the statement.

NOTE: Only statements mailed to briscoed@legis.la.gov and received prior to noon Tuesday, March 08, 2022, will be included in the record for this committee meeting.

All persons desiring to participate in the meeting shall utilize appropriate protective health measures and observe the recommended and appropriate social distancing.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Wheat offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 19 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Zeringue, Bacala, Carpenter, Carrier, Deshotel, DuBuisson, Edmonds, Freeman, Hughes, Illg, Kerner, Lyons, Marcelle, McFarland, Miguez, Romero, Thompson, Villio, and Wheat voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Jerome "Zee" Zeringue
House Committee on Appropriations