

**House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development
and
House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment**

Minutes of Meeting
2024-2025 Interim
August 22, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Troy D. Romero, chair of the House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development, called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. in Room 5, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

II. ROLL CALL

HOUSE AGRI MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Troy D. Romero, chair
Representative Beryl A. Amedée
Representative Chad Michael Boyer
Representative Marcus Anthony Bryant
Representative Rhonda Gaye Butler
Representative Kimberly Landry Coates
Representative Chance Keith Henry
Representative C. Travis Johnson, vice chair
Representative Jacob Jules Landry
Representative Danny McCormick
Representative Wayne McMahan
Representative Rodney Wayne Schamerhorn
Representative Vincent "Vinney" J. St. Blanc, III
Representative Christopher Turner
Representative John E. Wyble

HOUSE NATR MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Brett F. Geymann, chair
Representative Marcus Anthony Bryant
Representative R. Dewith Carrier
Representative Kimberly Landry Coates
Representative Jason Brian DeWitt
Representative Jessica Domangue
Representative C. Travis Johnson
Representative Timothy P. Kerner
Representative Jeremy LaCombe
Representative Jacob Jules Landry
Representative Danny McCormick
Representative Joseph A. Orgeron, vice chair
Representative Jerome Zeringue

HOUSE AGRI MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Lawrence A. "Larry" Bagley
Representative Adrian Fisher
Representative Larry Selders
Representative Francis C. Thompson

HOUSE NATR MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Tehmi Jahi Chassion
Representative Shane Mack
Representative Neil Riser

HOUSE AGRI STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lashay Masami, attorney
Ashley Davillier, committee administrative assistant

HOUSE NATR STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Robin Stalder, attorney
Ben Westra, attorney
Lacy Slaughter, committee administrative assistant

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Elizabeth Douglas, sergeant at arms

III. BUSINESS

A. To receive information on the impact and effects of solar panel installation on agricultural land and aspects of solar energy development in Louisiana pursuant to HSR No. 2 of the 2024 Regular Session from the following entities:

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry

Commissioner Mike Strain, LDAF, Third Floor, Capitol, no address provided, spoke for information only. He explained the costs of solar panel installations and the issues of placing them on agricultural land. He answered questions from committee members on restrictions, neighboring homeowner concerns, decommissioning of solar panels, and comparing zoning ordinances with other states.

Hanna Gettys, general counsel, Louisiana Municipal Association, 6767 Perkins Road, Baton Rouge, LA, spoke for information only. She suggested guidelines should be put in place to create uniformity with ordinances regarding solar panel installations, but would not want to take away rights from the homeowners and farmers in the surrounding areas. She answered questions from committee members regarding the need for revenue, protecting property rights, and the placement of solar panels and how they affect neighboring homeowners.

Debbie Henton, Police Jury Association, 707 North Seventh, Baton Rouge, LA 70800, spoke for information only. She agreed that zoning ordinances should be established and that her office has had meetings regarding solar panel installations on a local level.

The Office of the Governor

Stephen Swiber, Office of the Governor, 900 West Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70801, spoke for information only. He answered questions from the committee members regarding power purchase agreements, the cost of solar panels, and the number of jobs that became available due to solar panel projects.

Jim Simon, American Sugarcane League, 206 East Bayou Road, Thibodaux, LA 70302, spoke for information only. He explained how the location of solar panel installations has been affecting sugar cane mills. He suggested the legal community in Louisiana learn more about solar panels to provide homeowners and farmers with better legal representation when dealing with this matter.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Cole Garrett, LDWF, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, spoke for information only. He answered questions from the committee members and explained the impact of solar panel installations on local communities.

Tommy Tuma, LDWF Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA, spoke for information only. He answered questions from the committee members and explained the site selection process for solar panel installations.

Mike Perot, LDWF, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, spoke for information only. He answered questions from the committee members and explained the affects solar panels have had on wildlife and endangered species.

Chair Geymann in the chair.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation

Rebecca Triche, LA Wildlife Federation, 8480 Bluebonnet Boulevard, #F, Baton Rouge, LA 70810, spoke for information only. She explained the effectiveness of co-beneficial use of solar sites that incorporates farming and other land management practices.

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality

Jerry Lang, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, 602 North Fifth Street, no city and state provided, spoke for information only. He explained his department's main concern with the installations will be the disposal sites needed for the decommissioned panels in the years to come, given they are considered hazardous waste and will need to be disposed of properly.

Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources

Tyler Gray, DENR, 617 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only. He answered questions from the committee members and provided an update on the legislation that was passed in previous sessions regarding his department and stated they do not have any plans to issue permits until they have decommissioning rules established for the solar panels.

Dustin Davidson, DENR, 617 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only.

Blake Canfield, LDENR, 617 North Third Street, 12th Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only. He answered questions from the committee members and explained his department is comparing with municipalities in other states on the cost of decommissioning solar panels and the disposal process.

LSU Center for Energy Studies

Greg Upton, LSU Center for Energy Studies, Energy Coast and Environment Building, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA, spoke for information only and provided a handout, Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records. He provided information on the energy sector and how it has impacted the state.

ULL Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Energy Center

Terrence Chambers, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 110 Chastant Boulevard, Lafayette, LA 70508, spoke for information only and presented a PowerPoint entitled, "Solar Energy for Louisiana".

Brandon Frey, LPSC, P.O. Box 91154, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, spoke for information only. He answered questions from committee members and spoke about the solar panel projects that are in queue to be certified by his office.

Kevin Hayes, La. Landowners Association, 412 North Fourth, 328, no city and state provided, spoke for information only. He explained how important it is to take into account landowners' interests and property rights when dealing with solar panel installations.

Jody Montelaro, Entergy, 446 North Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA, spoke for information only. He answered some questions that were asked earlier in the meeting and gave his perspective on the progress of the solar panel installation projects in the state.

Representatives of the solar industry

Norby Chabert, Southern Renewable Energy Alliance, 6855 Fay Drive, Houma, LA 70364, spoke for information only and answered questions from the committee members.

Jeffrey Clark, Advanced Power Alliance, 304 Laurel Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70801, spoke for information only and answered questions from the committee members.

Dan Claitor, S.R.E.A., 6513 Perkins Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, spoke for information only and answered questions from the committee members.

B. Public testimony

Bobby Guilbeau, Ward 5 FPD of Evangeline Parish, 1084 Cedar Lane, Turkey Creek, no state provided, spoke for information only.

Linda DeVille, landowner, 3726 Faubourg Road, Washington, LA 70589, spoke for information only.

Tommy Cryer, 3883 Deer Run Road, Lake Charles, LA 70611, spoke for information only.

Chair Romero in the chair.

Gregory Sigue, 4102 L. Theriot Road, New Iberia, LA 70560, spoke for information only.

Zac Lemoine, Center for Planning Excellence, 757 Main Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only.

Marcus Hines, 3398 Robin Lane, Lake Charles, LA 70611, spoke for information only.

Jules Menou, 1540 Campfire Road, no city and state provided, spoke for information only.

Chancey Plaisance, 4094 Topsy Road, Lake Charles, LA 70611, spoke for information only.

Daron Farquhar, 4451 Arnold White Road, Lake Charles, LA 70611, spoke for information only.

Melissa Reeves, 4320 Topsy Road, Lake Charles, LA 70611, spoke for information only.

Samara Rigmaiden, 242 Mattie Reeves Road, Ragley, LA 70657, spoke for information only.

Greg Brady, 5095 Hickory Branch Road, Lake Charles, LA 70611, spoke for information only.

Sam Ihli, 964 Chapel Lane, Lake Charles, LA 70611, spoke for information only.

Tim Croxdale, 2833 Cardinale Lane, Lake Charles, LA 70611, spoke for information only.

Prepared statements were received via email.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Amedée offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 5 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Romero, Amedée, Coates, Schamerhorn, and Wyble voted yea.

Representative DeWitt offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 4 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Geymann, Coates, DeWitt, and Domangue voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Co-Chair Troy D. Romero
House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development

Date approved: