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House Speaker responds to Governor Edwards' Budget Proposal for 2022

January 25, 2022 —This week, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards announced his priorities for the state budget regarding the upcoming 2022 Legislative Session. Louisiana is in the unique position of a budget surplus with \$1.4 billion in unspent federal pandemic aid. The Governor's announcement highlights two key areas to focus funding: education, specifically teacher pay raises, and infrastructure across the state. While Speaker Schexnayder expressed support for funding in these areas, he also stressed the importance of investing the money wisely instead of increasing the deficit by adding reoccurring expenses.

The Governor's budget proposal includes more than \$1.1 billion in funding for critical infrastructure, including \$500 million for a new Mississippi River Bridge in Baton Rouge. Of this, Speaker Schexnayder said, "Anyone who has ever driven through Baton Rouge knows the Mississippi River Bridge is a huge problem. Building an additional bridge to reduce I-10 congestion is one of many critical and much-needed investments in infrastructure, and it has my full support."

Another key component of Governor Edwards' proposal was education, including \$148.4 million for K-12 teacher and staff pay raises. This proposed teacher pay raise of \$1500 is significantly higher than the raise teachers received previously. "Without a doubt, our teachers deserve more," said Speaker Schexnayder, "however, before we can commit to a pay raise, we need to ensure we have the necessary recurring revenue to ensure this is a permanent raise and that we are not misleading them with a one-time bonus."

The 2022 Regular Legislative session will begin Monday, March 14, 2022. All committee meetings and floor debates will be streamed via video on the state legislature's website www.legis.la.gov.

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