

Standing together

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Discussions on redistricting and reapportionment have reached a fever pitch across the state, and the 3rd Congressional District has been targeted as the most likely to be dissected.

Changes will happen throughout the state, and tough decisions will have to be made by the Louisiana Legislature and accepted by the people.

As the parish presidents of the fifth-largest metropolitan statistical area in Louisiana, we would like to take this opportunity to explain why it is critical for the state to keep Lafourche and Terrebonne together in their entirety within one congressional district.

- It is not by accident Lafourche and Terrebonne have claimed the lowest unemployment rate for many years. This huge economic engine is the result of the substantial business relationships between the two parishes, including many companies maintaining facilities in both parishes. Workforce training is a priority for our region to maintain this economic stability, and as mandated by the federal government, our workforce investment board is integrated in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes, which greatly assists with our workforce development needs.
- Located in Lafourche Parish, Port Fourchon is the premier oil and gas port for the Gulf of Mexico, serving over 90 percent of the Gulf's deepwater needs. Terrebonne Parish, the Port of Terrebonne and its businesses work closely with Port Fourchon to provide the necessary support services and ensure the economic engines are continually generating activity for our area.
- Lafourche and Terrebonne will forever remain linked through their federally sanctioned national estuary program — the Barataria -Terrebonne National Estuary, which links our irreplaceable region through its ecology. With the highest land-loss rates in the nation and the most highly populated unprotected region in the state, it is critical we have unconditional support in Congress to help fund the necessary projects to help protect and restore our region.
- The shared interests of Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes are visibly evident through mutual infrastructure projects including levee protection and coastal restoration, with several regional entities including levee districts and nonprofit organizations that cross parish lines and work in tandem on both issues. Major infrastructure projects like the improvements to La. 1, the only access to and from Port Fourchon, not only serve our region, but our state and nation as well.
- The two parishes are the model for setting high standards for regional higher-education partnerships through the relationship between Nicholls State University in Thibodaux and Fletcher Technical Community College in Houma.
- The shared cultural issue of our Native American population of 18,000 members has a rich history of consolidation between the two parishes. Having been uprooted for centuries, they have finally found a home along the bayous of Terrebonne and Lafourche.

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Understandably, Lafayette and Lake Charles would like to stay in the same district. However, comparing the facts, Lafayette and Lake Charles are not in the same MSA like Lafourche and Terrebonne. Moreover, Lafourche and Terrebonne are contiguous while the other cities are miles apart. To split Houma and Thibodaux would be akin to splitting Broussard and Lafayette or Lake Charles and Sulphur into separate congressional districts.

In conclusion, dividing Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes into separate congressional districts when we are working together on common problems and emerging opportunities would be counterintuitive. Lafourche and Terrebonne need a single congressman who will understand our interlocking issues and who will have both parishes' common interests in mind.

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