

# Stay Up to PAR

## ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2015



## President's Letter

Transparent and responsible government has never occurred easily in Louisiana. The state's fiscal policies and public service programs have improved in many ways since the Public Affairs Research Council was launched 65 years ago in Alexandria by concerned citizens and business people from across the state. Yet, worthwhile reforms must be relearned and renewed to keep the state moving forward. Reliable and relevant information is needed for the task.



At PAR, the primary focus has always been on achieving more open and accountable governance in Louisiana. This fight might never be fully or permanently won, but it can surely be lost. PAR's role is to produce accurate and revealing information about state finances and policy actions, with a balance

of authoritative public education services and independently formed policy recommendations.

We have maintained that commitment with many ambitious projects. Our groundbreaking report, *Innovation in Louisiana*, won a national award this year for "Most Distinguished Research." PAR won another national honor for our work promoting more open records at state government agencies. The *PAR Guide to the State Budget Crisis* and related reports on the state fiscal scene have become essential resources for organizations, political candidates and citizens in search of solutions and a better understanding of Louisiana's financial challenges. PAR recently launched a program to provide ongoing fiscal oversight of the state's spending on coastal restoration and protection and its job impacts.

The *PAR Guide to the 2014 Constitutional Amendments* was downloaded more than 320,000 times from our website last fall. The popular *Guide to the Legislature* is now available as a free mobile app. Through publications, interviews and outreach, we have offered independent and authoritative guidance on key state issues, including health care and hospital privatizations, K-12 and higher education, ethics and our formidable challenges for transportation infrastructure. This newsletter highlights our programs and recognizes the many generous supporters of PAR and its mission. Our members and benefactors are the pillars of our organization. We are thankful for their strong and steady support.

**Robert Travis Scott**

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## PAR Launches Program to Evaluate Fiscal Oversight of Coastal Restoration Initiatives

Louisiana is poised to receive and spend billions of dollars for coastal protection and restoration in the next several years. The state's Master Plan has over \$50 billion in projects. The most significant source of new funding will come from the recent Deepwater Horizon oil spill settlement. This settlement will provide \$6.5 billion, and maybe as much as \$8.7 billion, over 15 years to Louisiana. While these funds provide a great opportunity to restore our coast, they come with the risk of mischief and misuse. With this in mind, PAR has embarked on a project to review the state's coastal protection and restoration finances to serve as a watchdog over the process.

PAR has called attention to some of the fiscal machinations involving coastal restoration dollars. For example, last year, the state administration had planned to use a funds transfer bill, rather than an appropriations bill, to remove money from the Coastal Fund and place it in the state's Overcollections Fund, where it could then be spent on state general operating costs. This plan was derailed when the House of Representatives removed this maneuver from the budget after PAR called attention to the issue. Unfortunately earlier this year, the administration was successful in raiding the constitutionally protected Coastal Protection and Restoration Fund to help fill a mid-year deficit even after PAR highlighted the issue.

While several groups are focused on coastal and environmental issues, PAR is uniquely positioned as an organization to follow the money. PAR's respected, independent voice, particularly in the areas of transparency and fiscal matters, garnered the attention of national and local organizations. PAR is following a three-year course of action to provide education, oversight and policy guidance that will promote responsible fiscal policy for coastal restoration in Louisiana. *continue...*

## Join or Renew your Membership

As a new, or renewing, member of PAR, you will receive all the benefits of membership:

- Preserving the historical legacy of the organization to promote good government and provide the public with facts necessary to make informed decisions on political issues.
- Receive Annual PAR Guide to the Louisiana Legislature
- Reduced rates to conference
- Receive all PAR reports, analyses and other publications
- Future benefits as they become available to members

Your membership dues support the operations of The Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, a private non-profit 501 (c)3 organization. You may join securely online at [www.parlouisiana.org](http://www.parlouisiana.org).

## PUBLIC RECORDS COMMENTARY EMBRACED BY GOVERNOR CANDIDATES

Former Louisiana Senator Russell Long said it well: "A government by secrecy benefits no one. It injures the people it seeks to serve; it damages its own integrity and operation. It breeds distrust, dampens the fervor of its citizens and mocks their loyalty."

One of PAR's fundamental roles is to encourage transparency in state and local government. The public has a right to know how government decisions are made and who makes them, how taxpayer money is spent and on whom. PAR is a leading voice for open access to government documents and meetings of public bodies. The prize-winning Sunshine Headquarters portal on PAR's website is an authoritative and useful resource for citizens, the media and government employees. PAR staff is called upon frequently to address citizen and media inquiries about public records and open meetings under Louisiana law and practice.

PAR's work in this area has helped lead to significant measures for disclosures of government contracting, potential conflicts of interest, the financial interests of elected and appointed officials and campaign finance records. In April, PAR published a report and analysis, *Louisiana needs a champion for open government: Serious problems with the public records law and the deliberative process privilege must be fixed*. Its themes were embraced by all the major candidates for governor. The report recommended improvements in the law regarding the records of the governor's office and became a primary source of information and inspiration on the subject. The Legislature unanimously passed a bill during the 2015 Legislative session that revised the law on governor's records.

Much more work remains to be done to ensure appropriate and meaningful transparency in Louisiana government operations. State and local agencies look for ways to skirt the law and keep secrets from the public, hiding the true record of events and official responsibility. The Legislature is often tempted to erode transparency with needless exceptions to the law. PAR's work in this area will remain critical in the years ahead.



...continued PAR will educate policy makers, stakeholders and the public on the master plan, revenue sources and, most importantly, the decision-making process. Stakeholders and the public have a common interest in a process that fosters transparency and fairness in spending and contracting. This includes bringing together stakeholders for in-depth discussions of key coastal issues. This effort is being supported by foundations with national and international scope, including the Walton Family Foundation, blue moon fund and Oxfam America. Louisiana supporters of the project include the Credit Bureau of Baton Rouge Foundation and Entergy Louisiana.

PAR will establish a set of principles for public policy affecting these critical issues. These principles will be backed with an education strategy for the general public and key stakeholders. PAR will be engaged to provide regular monitoring and will play a watchdog role, particularly as a new coastal master plan, a new governor's administration and new methods of financing, operation and decision-making evolve in the next three years.

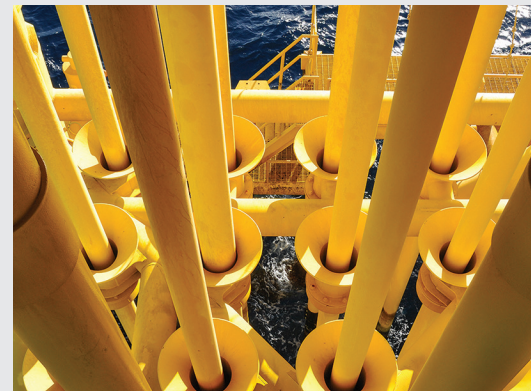
## PAR Receives National Awards

The Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana (PAR) has won two national awards from the Governmental Research Association (GRA). GRA is a national organization of individuals and groups who study and make recommendations on state and local policy issues. The awards to PAR were presented during the annual GRA conference held July 2015 in Denver, Colorado.

This year PAR was honored with the top prize in two of GRA's three award categories:

- **Most Distinguished Research:** *Innovation in Louisiana: Maximizing Investments in University Research to Promote a Knowledge-Based Economy*
- **Outstanding Policy Achievement:** *Public Records Law: Louisiana Needs a Champion for Open Government*

## PAR Report on Innovation in Louisiana



In March, PAR released a major study detailing the potential for Louisiana's universities to achieve a higher state profile as a national research hub for innovation and development. The report, *Innovation in Louisiana: Maximizing Investments in University Research to Promote a Knowledge-Based Economy*, won a national award from the Governmental Research Association for Most Distinguished Research.

The award recognizes an outstanding research effort on a challenging subject matter that is ground breaking. The judges for the award were unanimous in finding "the subject matter unique and important, the research deep and broad, the presentation engaging, and the recommendations specific and practical."

The PAR study also became the focus of an episode of *Louisiana Public Square*, an hour-long TV program styled as a town hall meeting on Louisiana Public Broadcasting. The show featured leading thinkers on the topic and was hosted by PAR President Robert Travis Scott and LPB President Beth Courtney, a PAR board member.

As we state in the report: opportunity is knocking for Louisiana. Innovation in Louisiana makes the case for why innovation matters in Louisiana and focuses on two major elements: the intellectual infrastructure in our universities and the mechanisms for knowledge transfer into the economy. The report examines the state of university research and development and makes a number of specific recommendations to state leaders, higher education officials and businesses to foster a better environment for innovation. This topic has long been a controversial one in Louisiana mainly because of the state's poor metrics, bureaucratic resistance to change and spending priorities in this area.

*Support for this report was provided by The Community Foundation of North Louisiana-Kinsey Family Advised Fund, Jennifer and Sean Reilly, the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation and PAR members.*

## PAR ELECTS NEW BOARD

The PAR board has elected the following officers to serve a term of one year: Chairman of the board is **Jake Giardina, Jr.** of Jeanerette; Vice Chairman is **Allan Bissinger** of Metairie; Secretary is **Scott Hensgens** of Baton Rouge; and Treasurer is **Kristin Wall** of Baton Rouge.

The PAR membership has elected the following directors to serve a three-year term ending in 2018: **Robert T. Ratcliff, Jr.** is the President of Ratcliff Construction, located in Alexandria; **Ed Hardin, Jr.** is a Partner at Kean Miller, located in Baton Rouge.

The PAR membership also re-elected the following directors to serve another three-year term ending in 2018. They are: **Greg Cotter**, Baton Rouge; **Fran Gladden**, Vice-President of Governmental & Public Affairs, Cox Communications, Baton Rouge; **Ann Knapp**, Lake Charles; **Ralph Miller**, Vice President of State & Government Relations, Freeport McMoRan, New Orleans; **Dr. Phillip Rozeman**, Founder, Education's Next Horizon, Shreveport; **Roland Toups**, Chairman & CEO, Turner Industries, Baton Rouge; **Forest Walker**, President, Walker Automotive, Alexandria; and **Kristin Wall**, President & CEO, LWCC, Baton Rouge.



Left to right, Board Vice Chairman **Allan Bissinger**, past PAR Chairman **Richard B. "Dick" Crowell**, PAR Board Chairman **Jacob Giardina, Jr.**

## EXERCISE YOUR WILLPOWER

By making a bequest or other planned gift, you can continue to help PAR make an important difference in our state. There are a number of options to include PAR in your will or estate plans.

- **Wills-** You can include PAR in your will with a specific dollar amount or percentage. Others prefer to gift a percentage of the "residue" or whatever remains after paying all inheritance, debts and costs. **(IF YOU HAVE ALREADY INCLUDED PAR IN YOUR WILL, PLEASE LET US KNOW.)**
- **Contingency Beneficiary-** Listing PAR as a contingency beneficiary allows you to leave a portion of your estate to PAR if your named beneficiary is unable to receive these gifts, and one or more of your specific bequests cannot be fulfilled.

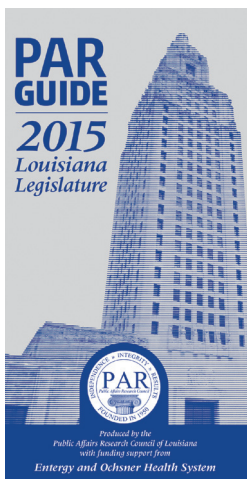
Leaving a gift to PAR in your will may reduce the estate tax burden on your heirs significantly. You should consult with a financial advisor or attorney to learn how giving may actually benefit your family while fulfilling your philanthropic goals and dreams.

*If you are interested in knowing how to include PAR in your will/estate plans, please contact Susan Mintz Kantrow at (225) 926-8414, ext. 217 or [susan@parlouisiana.org](mailto:susan@parlouisiana.org).*

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## Guide to the Louisiana Legislature



The *PAR Guide to the Legislature* is the indispensable book for anyone dealing with the legislature. Whether you are a veteran lobbyist or a political novice, the Guide provides critical information to make you better informed about state legislators, other elected officials, the congressional delegation and state agencies. The Guide includes sources of income for legislators, committee assignments, contact information and much more.

Copies are \$10 apiece plus tax and shipping and can be purchased online at [www.parlouisiana.com](http://www.parlouisiana.com), or at the PAR office. PAR members receive a free copy annually. PAR thanks Entergy and Ochsner Health System for their underwriting support of the Guide.

Also, you may download the PAR Guide as a FREE mobile app for all Apple and Android devices (keyword PAR Guide).

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# PAR's 2015 Annual Conference and Luncheon

The Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana held one of the largest and most successful annual conferences in its 65 year history on April 23 at the Crowne Plaza in Baton Rouge.

The luncheon was attended by more than 600 people, who gathered to support PAR and to hear the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist from The Advocate, Walt Handelsman, deliver the keynote speech. In addition to winning every major journalism award for cartooning excellence, Handelsman has authored seven collections of editorial cartoons and has his work syndicated by Tribune Agency in Chicago. His speech at the PAR luncheon was titled "Louisiana: The Cartoonist's Paradise," which addressed current issues facing the state and the nation and his perspective on them. He also discussed his process in crafting editorial cartoons and the reactions from the public. In keeping with the keynote address theme, the hallways of the conference were decorated with a display of editorial cartoons about PAR by various cartoonists to enlighten conference-goers about PAR's history.

"These cartoons adorn PAR's office walls to remind us of our long-term commitment to the citizens of this state," said PAR President Robert Travis Scott.

Scott also mentioned the various projects PAR has undertaken in the past year, including the groundbreaking report, *Innovation in Louisiana: Maximizing Investment in University Research to Promote a Knowledge-Based Economy*, as well as the new *PAR Guide to the State Budget Crisis*. In addition, PAR recently launched a program to provide ongoing fiscal oversight of the state's spending on coastal restoration and protection, as well as its job impacts.

"During these past 65 years, the focus has been on achieving more open and accountable governance in Louisiana," said Scott.

Reflecting this need for responsible governance, the morning panel featured an informative discussion with the four candidates running for governor. The panelists were Public Service Commissioner Scott Angelle, Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne, State Representative John Bel Edwards, and U.S. Senator David Vitter. The discussion was moderated by Robert Travis Scott. According to PAR Policy Director Dr. Steven Procopio, this forum provided a space for much-needed discussions.

"The best thing about the candidates' panel is how specific and detailed their answers were," said Procopio. "I think a lot of people thought that was a nice break from the norm that you see with lighter, less serious answers."

Topics discussed in the forum include Louisiana's ethics laws and enforcement system, state fiscal issues pertaining to establishing a sustainable revenue and spending outlook, higher education, health care, and environment and coastal inquiries, among others. Notably, candidates were asked about their views on government transparency concerning state agencies using the deliberative process privilege to deny public document requests, prompting pledges from each candidate to uphold open governance.

"We talked about transparency and open governance, particularly the governor's office," Procopio noted. "All of the candidates pledged to be a champion for open government, so we have them on record now."

The presenting sponsors of the event were Business First Bank, Chesapeake Energy Corporation, Cleco, Cox Communications, Eagle Cove Investments, Jones Walker, LCMC Health, LWCC, Pierson Investments, Ratcliff Companies, and Turner Industries. More than 60 organizations, companies, and individuals served as gold and silver table sponsors. Special thanks to the conference co-chairs, David Eustis, Fred Loy, and Virginia Freeman Rowan.



Walt Handelsman



Left to right, John Bel Edwards, Robert Travis Scott, Jay Dardenne, Scott Angelle



Left to right, David Vitter, Robert Travis Scott



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**Save the Date: 2016 PAR Conference and Luncheon, April 15, 2016**

