PAR’s 2010 conference draws crowd

PAR’s 2010 Annual Conference and Luncheon, which marked the organization’s 60th year, was another record-breaker. The luncheon attracted a crowd of nearly 600 to hear political analyst Charlie Cook deliver his keynote speech, “The Obama Presidency and the 2010 Midterm Elections.” The April 30 conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Baton Rouge was co-chaired by board members Layne McDaniel and Allan Bissinger.

The event was sponsored by All Star Automotive Group, Chevron, Cox Communications, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System and Kleinpeter Farms Dairy. More than 60 other individuals and organizations served as gold and silver table sponsors for the event.

Cook is the publisher of The Cook Political Report and political analyst for the National Journal Group, where he writes weekly for National Journal magazine and CongressDailyAM. He also writes a regular column for the Washington Quarterly, published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and is a political analyst for NBC News.

The morning panel session featured a lively discussion on the ongoing legislative session with a focus on budget issues and the state’s fiscal future. Panelists included Lanny Keller, editorial writer, The Advocate; Robert Travis Scott, state bureau chief, The Times-Picayune; Robert Mann, Manship chair and professor/senior fellow, Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs at LSU; and Buddy Roemer, former governor of Louisiana and U.S. congressman, currently president and CEO of Business First Bank. The discussion was moderated by Beth Courtney, president/CEO of Louisiana Public Broadcasting.
PAR Board elects five new members

Donna M. Saurage of Baton Rouge was re-elected chairman of the Public Affairs Research Council (PAR) Board of Directors at the organization’s annual conference in Baton Rouge on Friday, April 30.

The PAR Board also re-elected R. Hunter Pierson of Pierson Investments in New Orleans as vice chairman. Richard B. Crowell of Crowell & Owens in Alexandria was elected as secretary, and Jacob Giardina, Jr., of HONIRON Corporation in Jeanerette was elected as treasurer.

In addition to officers, the PAR membership elected five new Board members for three-year terms ending in 2013. New members of the Board of Directors are: Sonia Perez, president, AT&T Louisiana, New Orleans; Scott Hensgens, managing partner, Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, Baton Rouge; John Finan, president and CEO of FMOL Health System, Baton Rouge; Andy Dreher, vice president of governmental affairs, Entergy Louisiana, Baton Rouge; and Virginia Rowan, civic leader, New Orleans.

The PAR membership also re-elected eight directors to serve another three-year term ending in 2013. They are: John Maxwell Hamilton, dean, LSU Manship School of Mass Communication, Baton Rouge; Michael Madison, president, CLECO Corporation, Pineville; Sean Reilly, COO & president of outdoor division, Lamar Corporation, Baton Rouge; Ashton Phelps, Jr., publisher, The Times-Picayune, New Orleans; Duane Cowart, government affairs consultant, The Cowart Group, Baton Rouge; Trey Hill, manager, public affairs, Atmos Energy Corporation, Lafayette; Glenn Kinsey, president, Norman Corporation, Shreveport; and Julian Rodrigue, Sr., attorney, Rodrigue & Rodrigue, Covington.
PAR mourns the passing of loyal and committed board members

Board Chairman Donna Saurage requested a moment of silence at the luncheon to honor the recent death of four distinguished PAR members – Wallace and Eileen Armstrong, Brace Godfrey and Gordon Pugh.

Wallace Armstrong served with distinction as president of PAR from 1975-1976. He and his wife, Eileen, remained committed to PAR’s work throughout their lives. Their loyalty and dedication will always be remembered as a fundamental part of PAR history.

Gordon Pugh was one of PAR’s most enthusiastic members. He served on the Board of Directors for many years, was vice chairman in 2009 and co-chaired two annual conferences. His dedication to helping PAR grow was an inspiration to the organization, and he will be missed.

Brace Godfrey served on PAR’s Board of Directors for six years and chaired PAR’s Annual Conference and Luncheon. His contributions not only to PAR but also to the larger community are a significant loss.

Sponsors and board members gather at the reception and luncheon

ABOVE: Shown from left to right are Beth Courtney of LPB, PAR Board member; John Finan of FMOL, conference sponsor and PAR Board member; and Dr. Jim Richardson of LSU, past PAR Board chair.

RIGHT: Virginia Noland, past PAR Board member; and PAR Board members Greg Cotter and Ben Miller, Jr., of Kean Miller Hawthorne D’Armond McCowan & Jarman.

ABOVE: Shown from left to right are Fred Loy, PAR Board member; and Past PAR Board chairs Burton Weaver of Weaver Bros. Land & Timber Co. and Dr. James R. Peltier.

BÉLOW: Bob Raymond of All Star Automotive Group, event sponsor; Donna Saurage, PAR Board chairman; and Norman Saurage of Community Coffee.
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Please remember PAR in your will or estate planning.

For more information, contact Susan Mintz Kantrow at (225) 926-8414.
2009–2010 Highlights

The Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana is a private, nonprofit, non-partisan public policy research organization focused on pointing the way toward a more efficient, effective, transparent and accountable Louisiana government. PAR was founded in 1950 and is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations. PAR has never accepted state government funds.
PAR published a number of significant research studies on state government issues in the past year.

**Filling the Gap or Tipping the Scale?** This analysis evaluates the state’s two major discretionary incentive programs - the Mega-Project Development Fund and the Rapid Response Fund. The report recommends that certain changes in law and policy be made to ensure that taxpayer dollars are committed with maximum transparency and accountability.

**Moving Highway Funding to Stable Ground** Building on the findings in PAR’s March 2009 transportation funding analysis, this report examines a variety of options for funding the highway program and considers innovative approaches to funding mega-projects. The report identifies certain revenue dedications that would be acceptable sources of new funding.

**Public Mental Health Care in Louisiana** This report evaluates the state’s system of public mental health care and finds that the system is biased toward expensive institutional care and does not have the capacity to treat many of those with mental illness. The recommendations made are pragmatic solutions that are within current reach of policymakers dealing with austere budgets.

**The Unfinished Business of Ethics Reform** This report evaluates recent changes to the state’s ethics laws and enforcement process. It finds that some of the changes made as part of the 2008 ethics reform movement have weakened the state’s ability to monitor and enforce compliance with the laws. The analysis offers a model for an improved ethics administration system that would correct some of the newly created problems.

**Charter Schools in Louisiana** This analysis identifies best practices among Louisiana charter schools that can be replicated both in traditional public schools and new charter schools. The report describes these best practices, explains how charter schools are using them and calls for the state to take an active role in collecting and disseminating information about them to all school districts and schools.

**Working Toward a Client-Centered and Cost-Effective Approach to Medicaid Long-Term Care for the Elderly** This brief addresses issues in the state’s proposed budget for long-term care for the elderly and disabled adults. It raises concerns about shifting funding away from in-home care services and increasing funding for nursing home services.

**State Finance Comparison** This analysis compares Louisiana’s revenue and expenditure levels to other states using the most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau’s census of governments. The analysis demonstrates the significant effect of hurricane recovery spending on Louisiana’s relative rankings.

### Watchdog Issues

PAR issued the following commentaries to provide a timely perspective on current public issues:

- 02/18/10  PAR says don’t abolish Regents
- 09/24/09  Don’t exclude citizens from redistricting briefing, PAR says
- 09/21/09  PAR clarifies higher ed position
- 09/17/09  Resolve Ethics Adjudication Issues, PAR Says
- 06/26/09  Short session, short on ideas
- 06/17/09  PAR says public records bill would stifle open government
- 06/16/09  Delay cuts to develop plan, PAR says
- 05/19/09  PAR says keep eighth-grade LEAP standards intact
- 05/15/09  Don’t delay the REC, PAR says
- 05/13/09  Don’t increase the homestead exemption, PAR says
- 05/11/09  No whining for dining, PAR Says
- 05/05/09  Records bill would thwart transparency, PAR says
- 04/28/09  Delaying tax cuts should be considered, PAR says
PAR’s citizen education efforts over the past year included updating recurring publications for reprinting and Web publication, development of newsletters and fact sheets, making personal and media presentations, and answering requests for information.

**Guide to the 2010 Louisiana Legislature**  This handy, pocket-sized guide was completely updated to reflect elections through March 2010. The Guide provides helpful information about state legislators, statewide elected officials and the state’s congressional delegation, including biographical data, photos and contact information.

**Sunshine Law Fact Sheet Series** This series of three fact sheets focuses on the state’s open meetings and public records laws to inform citizens of their rights to access information about the business of government. The fact sheets offer a plain-language explanation of the state’s sunshine laws with practical tips on how the public can participate in open meetings and request public records.

**On the Health Record** This newsletter series places a spotlight on some of the facts and figures central to the public healthcare debate and explored further with in-depth PAR reports available at www.la-par.org. The premier issue of PAR’s healthcare policy newsletter focused on national health care reform and its potential impact on Louisiana.

**Speeches, Public Forums and Media Appearances** In the past year, PAR staff presented more than 50 speeches to civic or professional associations throughout the state and frequently appeared on TV and radio interviews.

**www.la-par.org** PAR’s Web site is often visited by citizens and media professionals around the state for useful information on Louisiana government.

### Research Studies Underway

**High School Dropout Prevention Strategies** This project will examine Louisiana’s high school dropout problem and compare the state’s latest “career-track” diploma option against what other states do to manage their dropout rates.

**Guide to the Constitutional Amendments** This recurring PAR publication will explain the arguments for and against each constitutional amendment that voters must approve or deny. PAR will publish two separate guides this year for the October and November elections.

**Healthcare Policy Series** PAR will continue its ongoing analysis of the state’s healthcare budget. Research findings will be published in a series of reports, briefs and commentaries to explore the state’s options for expanding healthcare for the uninsured by shifting resources, reorganizing safety net care and addressing the primary care physician shortage.

**NOCOG** PAR will actively participate in the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance (NOCOG). In conjunction with the Tulane Loyola Public Law Center (TPLC), PAR will lead the policy and structural development side of the Coalition’s work, providing ongoing technical support regarding access to public records and meetings, tracking recovery funding, contracting procedures and other issues and topics.

### National Awards

PAR won two national awards from the Governmental Research Association (GRA) in 2009. 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 in Washington, D.C., in July. PAR was honored for “GulfGov Reports: Study of the Recovery, Role, and Capacity of the States and Localities Damaged by the 2005 Hurricanes” (Most Effective Education, region-level winner) and “Redistricting 2010: Reforming the Process of Distributing Political Power” (Most Distinguished Research, certificate of merit).
Participation on Boards and Commissions
PAR’s president and staff have represented PAR on the following boards and commissions:

- School and District Accountability Commission
- Louisiana High School Redesign Commission
- Civil Service Comprehensive Public Training Program Advisory Committee
- Louisiana Commission on Civic Education
- Louisiana Coalition for Open Government
- Levee District Authority Nominating Committee
- Louisiana Budget Project Advisory Committee (LANO)

2009-2010 Board of Directors

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