



Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, Inc.

COMMENTARY

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ETHICS BOARD DIRECTION TO BE DECIDED BY 1995 APPOINTMENTS

How strictly ethical standards for state and local elected officials in Louisiana will be enforced hinges on the upcoming appointment of members to the Board of Ethics for Elected Officials. Three of the board's five seats will be open, two to be filled by the Senate and one by the House, before the fall elections.

The board is powerful because it enforces the state's ethics code with respect to elected officials. Ethics laws are only as effective as their enforcement. Therefore, it is essential that appointees to the board be committed to impartial enforcement of high ethical standards clearly stated in the code.

(MORE)

Ethics Board Direction to be Decided by 1995 Appointments--add one

The informal process for nominating new board members allows for political maneuvering. Rather than using an independent body to recommend nominees, as is often done for other politically-sensitive boards, any member of either house may recommend a nominee. The Public Affairs Research Council (PAR) and the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) want to ensure politics is not the key criterion used to select nominees and fill the open seats. The importance of these appointments should not be lost among the political rhetoric and infighting of an election year.

Louisiana citizens appear to be tiring of "politics as usual." Recent public opinion polls show growing concern about public officials placing self-interest before the public interest. At least two groups of legislators have proposed reform legislation for the upcoming session that would create tougher ethical standards.

If those legislators and others are committed to reform, they will pay close attention to the upcoming nomination and election process and vote for only those nominees whose commitment to strict ethical standards is unquestionable.

Also, citizens claiming to be fed up with Louisiana's lack of ethics in government need to act as well. Concerned citizens should call and write their legislators and let them know ethical issues are important. Such action will create grass-roots support for nominees committed to high standards and true reform that the Legislature cannot ignore.