



Spring 2007

Newsletter

Member Update of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana

PAR 2007-2008 Board of Directors

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*NOTE: Past chairmen also
serve as ex-officio members of
the Board.*

PAR's 2007 Annual Conference hosts record crowd



Above: PAR guests and sponsors take a moment of silence as Donna Saurage delivers the 2007 Annual Luncheon invocation.

PAR's 2007 Annual Conference and Luncheon attracted a record crowd of more than 600 attendees to preview Louisiana's insurance crisis and future political issues as they relate to the storms of 2005. The April 27 conference at the Holiday Inn Select in Baton Rouge was co-chaired by board members **Virginia Noland** and **Kim Sport**.

The event was sponsored by **AllStar Automotive Group, C.J. Brown/Latter & Blum Realtors, Cox Communications, Doré Energy, W&T Offshore** and **Whitney National Bank**. More than 70 other individuals and organizations served as gold and silver table sponsors.

John M. Barry was the keynote speaker at the luncheon. Barry drew parallels between the infamous Mississippi River flood of 1927 and Hurricane Katrina of 2005, but noted that the way people viewed their government, national priorities and politics would dictate the extent of influence this disaster would have into the future.

Outgoing PAR Board Chairman **Dr. James Peltier** was awarded a plaque in recognition of his dedicated service to PAR. Incoming Board Chairman **David Eustis** thanked outgoing Board members **Bill Doré, Pres Kabacoff** and **George McInnis**.

The morning panel session, entitled "Louisiana's Insurance Crisis," featured **Miles Bruder** of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, **Kevin Cunningham** with the American Insurance Association, Insurance Commissioner **Jim Donelon**, Louisiana Public Broadcasting Managing Editor **Robyn Ekins** and PAR President **Jim Brandt**.

New leadership elected for PAR's 2007 Board of Directors

David Eustis, senior vice president of Whitney National Bank, was elected chairman of the Public Affairs Research Council (PAR) Board of Directors at the organization's annual conference in Baton Rouge on Friday, April 27. Eustis has served the organization in a number of leadership roles over the years, most recently as its 2006 vice chairman.

The PAR Board also elected **Donna Saurage** of Baton Rouge as vice chairman; **Gordon A. Pugh**, senior partner of Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson in Baton Rouge as secretary; and **R. Hunter Pierson** of Pierson Investments in New Orleans as treasurer.

In addition to the new PAR officers, the membership also elected to the Board **Michelle Avery**, Certified Public Accountant from Covington; **Mike Madison**, president of CLECO from Pineville; **Stephen Moret**, president of the Baton Rouge Area Chamber; and **Rob Stewart**, vice president of State Farm Insurance Company in Louisiana.

Re-elected members of the Board include: **Duane Cowart**, government affairs consultant with The Cowart Group in Baton Rouge; **Louis Freeman**, civic activist from New Orleans; **Brace Godfrey**, CEO of Cyntreniks in Baton Rouge; **John Maxwell Hamilton**, dean of the LSU Manship School of Mass Communication in Baton Rouge; **Tim Hardy**, partner with Lemle and Kelleher in Baton Rouge; **Trey Hill**, manager of public affairs with Atmos Energy Corporation in Lafayette; **Glenn Kinsey**, president of Norman Corporation in Shreveport; **Virginia Noland**, civic activist from Baton Rouge; **Ashton Phelps**, publisher of The Times-Picayune in New Orleans; **Sean Reilly**, COO and president of the LAMAR Corporation, Outdoor Division, in Baton Rouge; and **Julian Rodrigue**, attorney with Rodrigue & Rodrigue in Covington.



Above: 2007 PAR Chairman David Eustis (right) and PAR President Jim Brandt.



Above: Outgoing PAR Chairman Dr. James Peltier (left), PAR Board member Burton Weaver, presenting sponsor Sharon Kleinpeter of Cox Communications, 2007 PAR Chairman David Eustis and PAR Board member Tim Hardy.



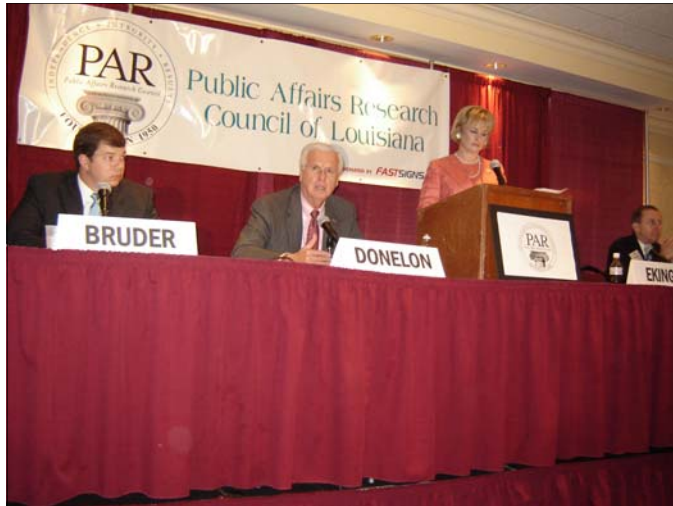
Above: PAR Board member Sean Reilly (left), Chairman of the Baton Rouge Credit Bureau Terrell Brown, Jan Ross with the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation and PAR Board member Brace Godfrey.



See PAR 2006-2007 HIGHLIGHTS
for a summary of research studies and
program activities over the past year.

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Panel discussion: "Louisiana's Insurance Crisis"



Above: Miles Bruder, director of health care & insurance policy at the Louisiana Recovery Authority (left), Commissioner of Insurance Jim Donelon and Robyn Eking of Louisiana Public Broadcasting.



Above: Robyn Eking of Louisiana Public Broadcasting (left), PAR President Jim Brandt and Kevin Cunningham, legal counsel for the American Insurance Association.

Keynote speaker delivers "The Past as Prologue? Floods, Politics and the Future"

PAR welcomed prize-winning and *New York Times* best-selling author John M. Barry as keynote speaker at its afternoon luncheon. Barry's books have won more than 20 awards, including "Outstanding Book on Science or Medicine," the "September Eleventh Award" and the "Francis Parkman Prize of the Society of American Historians."

Serving on advisory boards for M.I.T. and Johns Hopkins University, as well as the newly consolidated Louisiana Flood Control Authority, Barry was able to provide a unique perspective on Louisiana's recovery efforts and its role in creating a quality economy for other parts of the nation by bearing the brunt of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.



Above: PAR officers and presenting sponsors welcome keynote speaker John M. Barry

PAR establishes Emogene Pliner Endowment Fund for Research Interns

David Eustis, PAR chairman, announced at PAR's Annual Luncheon the creation of the **Emogene Pliner Endowment Fund for Research Interns**. The endowment fund in honor of Ms. Pliner was unanimously approved at the PAR Board of Directors meeting prior to the luncheon.

Begun with generous donations from Charles Ellis Brown and Sean and Jennifer Reilly, the fund will continue Emogene Pliner's long-standing commitment to PAR and its public policy research program. Ms. Pliner was the second employee hired at PAR and served the organization for 41 years. At the time of her retirement in 1992, Ms. Pliner was PAR's research director. She was

the recipient of several national awards for her work and was widely recognized as one of the most knowledgeable authorities on Louisiana government.

"Emogene Pliner's long-standing commitment to the sound, scholarly, unbiased research that has been the hallmark of PAR studies is unmatched," Eustis stated. PAR President Jim Brandt added, "We can think of no better way to recognize Emogene Pliner's many contributions to PAR, the research community and the state of Louisiana than to name this research internship endowment fund in her memory."

Ms. Pliner passed away in December 2006.

PAR's Presenting Sponsors



Gold Table Sponsors

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



2006–2007 HIGHLIGHTS

The **Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana** is an independent voice, offering solutions to critical public issues in Louisiana through accurate, objective research and focusing public attention on those solutions.

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PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

PAR published a number of significant research studies on state government issues in the past year.

Action Steps for Access to Care PAR published a health care policy brief that analyzes accessibility to health care in Louisiana and outlines six recommendations for reform that would increase the availability of primary and preventive care throughout the state. The report describes the cost savings that could be realized by shifting health care for the poor and uninsured out of the emergency rooms and into doctors' offices. This was the first report in an ongoing series of PAR health care policy briefs highlighting major issues and recommending reforms that affect health care programs and state and federal spending in Louisiana.

Teacher and School Employee Pay: Current Issues PAR published an analysis of teacher and school employee pay and the state's options for granting raises. The report recommends that any pay increases granted should be tied to the proportion of normal state funding each district receives, rather than distributed as a flat sum to each teacher and school employee. Local flexibility for awarding the raises is essential for targeting the additional funds to each district's particular challenges.

Realigning Charity Health Care and Medical Education in Louisiana PAR published an analysis of the state's charity hospital system. This report examines the current structure and funding of care for the uninsured and medical education in the state as compared to other states nationwide. It shows that with the implementation of appropriate reforms, the state can develop a more community-based approach to health care that provides expanded access and improved quality and outcomes.

GulfGov Reports: One Year Later and **GulfGov Reports: A Year and a Half After Katrina and Rita, An Uneven Recovery** These two reports were released as part of the GulfGov Reports project, a joint effort with the Rockefeller Institute of Government in New York. The project is the first multi-state impact assessment of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the Gulf Coast region. These were the initial semi-annual publications of a longitudinal study looking at the long-term effects on the affected areas' economies, population distribution, rebuilding efforts and governmental effectiveness.

GulfGov Reports: Education In this special interim report, GulfGov Reports looks at the impact of the hurricanes in 15 of the affected communities. School officials across the 15 districts face a number of similar challenges, such as maintaining healthy cash flows, overcoming the time lag for FEMA reimbursements, keeping pace with the rising cost of construction, and replacing large numbers of books and supplies at once. There are things that can be done in advance that will help mitigate the impact of disaster, and this study makes a convincing case for that preparation.

WATCHDOG ISSUES

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

- 03/19/07 PAR Announces Ethics Reform Agenda for 2007
- 03/07/07 PAR Says Don't Pull Plug on the RSD
- 01/26/07 PAR Says Turf Battle Threatens Planning Integrity
- 01/23/07 PAR Says Senate Should Expand Transparency
- 12/16/06 PAR Calls Session a Waste
- 12/13/06 LRA Should Limit Grant for LSU Hospital, PAR Says
- 11/30/06 PAR Says Delay Session
- 10/23/06 Health Care Collaborative: Go Statewide, Consider Charity Hospitals
- 10/19/06 Reject Proposals to Issue Rebates, PAR Says
- 06/19/06 PAR Says Session Missed Opportunities

06/12/06 Keep Nursing Home Payments Flexible, PAR Says
06/08/06 PAR Urges More Oversight for Aid Spending
06/06/06 PAR Says Close Loophole Allowing Free Tickets for Elected Officials
06/01/06 PAR Says Consolidate New Orleans Assessors
05/11/06 PAR Says Ban Recovery Contracts for Officials
05/09/06 PAR Says Let Sun Shine on Agencies within Governor's Office
04/03/06 PAR Says Keep Ban on Contributions During Session

CITIZEN EDUCATION

PAR's citizen education efforts over the past year included updating recurring publications for reprinting and Web publication, making personal and media presentations, and answering requests for information.

Guide to the 2007 Louisiana Legislature This handy, pocket-sized guide was completely updated to reflect elections through February 2007. The Guide provides helpful information about state legislators, statewide elected officials and the state's congressional delegation, including biographical data, photos and contact information.

Guide to the Constitutional Amendments This objective analysis explains the arguments for and against each constitutional amendment that voters must approve or deny. PAR published two separate guides for the September and November elections in 2006. There were 21 constitutional amendments in 2006.

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. The GulfGov Reports Web site (www.rockinst.org/gulfgov) was unveiled in August 2006.

RESEARCH STUDIES UNDERWAY

Tuition For years, higher education management boards in Louisiana have requested more flexibility to raise tuition and fees, pointing to the fact that Louisiana is one of only two states where the Legislature completely regulates required institutional charges. Other states have found a middle ground that allows institutions a degree of tuition-setting flexibility and autonomy bound by certain limitations. This study will examine Louisiana's options for increasing tuition-setting flexibility while ensuring appropriate comparability, affordability and access.

Candidate Issues This report will detail the most important below-the-radar issues facing the state during the terms of the officials elected in 2007. The PAR report will help to inform the debates and force discussion of many of the obscure yet crucial policy issues that statewide and legislative candidates should address. Many of the policy choices they will make if elected have no clear solution and must be approached from a philosophical, rather than empirical, rationale. For example, matters of tax structure, funding priorities, health care reform and economic development will require steady leadership from a foundation of basic policy goals that should be laid out during each official's candidacy.

Federal Aid Process and Priorities The pace at which FEMA Public Assistance (PA) grants and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) awards make their way through the layers of governmental bureaucracy at all levels determines the pace of the recovery. This report highlights some of the roadblocks Louisiana and Mississippi are grappling with as they steer these somewhat flexible funding sources to the areas in need. This report will be published as part of the GulfGov Reports project.

PARTICIPATION ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

PAR's president and staff have represented PAR on the following boards and commissions:

School and District Accountability Commission	Member of the Louisiana Recovery Authority Audit Task Force
Blue Ribbon Commission for Educational Excellence	
Governor's Healthcare Reform Panel	Member of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission Task Force on Government Efficiency
Commission on Workforce Competitiveness	Louisiana Commission on Civic Education
Governmental Research Assoc. (GRA) Board of Trustees	Louisiana Coalition for Open Government
High School Redesign Task Force	Levee District Authority Nominating Committee
Civil Service Comprehensive Public Training Program Advisory Committee	Louisiana Budget Project Advisory Committee
	Recovery School District Advisory Committee

NATIONAL AWARDS

The Governmental Research Association (GRA) awarded PAR the 2006 Certificate of Merit for Outstanding Policy Achievement for its report "Education Finance Reform: A 65% Solution?" This report analyzed a proposal to require that at least 65% of school district expenditures goes to classroom instruction. 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 Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana 2006-2007 Board of Directors

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