Summer 2005

Newsletter

Member Update of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana

PAR 2005-2006 Board of Directors

Officers

Dr. James R. Peltier
Chairman
David Eustis
Vice Chairman
Donna M. Saurage
Secretary
Gordon A. Pugh
Treasurer

Board Members

Harry J. Blumenthal Jr.
James Bradford
Donna Carville
E. Renae Conley
Beth Courtney
Duane Cowart
George L. Crain Sr.
Richard B. "Dick" Crowell
William J. Doré
Rand H. Falbaum
Louis M. Freeman
Brace B. Godfrey Jr.
John Maxwell Hamilton
Timothy W. "Tim" Hardy
Trey Hill
John F. Jones
Pres Kabacoff
Glenn V. Kinsey
Ann Knapp
Mel Lagarde
O. Fred Loy
Tim McFadden
George E. McInnis
Richard O. Mohring
Virginia B. Noland
William A. Oliver
Frederick B. Palmer
Ashton Phelps Jr.
R. Hunter Pierson
Sean Reilly
Julian J. Rodrigue Sr.
Mark H. Segura
Robert M. "Rob" Stuart Jr.
George H. Wilson Jr.

NOTE: Past chairmen also serve ex-officio.

PAR's 55th Annual Conference previews short, packed session

PAR's 55th Annual Conference and Luncheon attracted a crowd of over 500 attendees to preview the 2005 legislative session. The April 22 conference at the Holiday Inn Select was co-chaired by board members **Brace B. Godfrey Jr.** of Baton Rouge and **Louis M. Freeman** of New Orleans. The event focused on the wide range of topics expected to be covered in the state's first hybrid fiscal session, for which each legislator was allowed to pre-file five general bills and an unlimited number of fiscal bills to be addressed during the short two-month session.

Governor Blanco delivers the luncheon keynote speech while newly elected PAR Board Chairman Dr. James Peltier listens.

The event was sponsored by **C.J. Brown/Latter & Blum Realtors**, **Cleco Power**, **Cox Communications**, **Doré Energy** and **W&T Offshore**. More than 50 other individuals and organizations served as gold and silver table sponsors.

Governor Kathleen Blanco was the keynote speaker at the luncheon. She outlined her legislative agenda and characterized all of her priorities as being aimed at ending poverty in Louisiana. Her agenda included expanding pre-K funding, maintaining the Stelly Plan tax reforms, expanding ethics regulations for legislators and retirement investment boards, offering more choices in healthcare for citizens and implementing several tax reforms for economic development.

Outgoing PAR Board Chairman **George Nelson** was awarded a plaque in recognition of his service. Incoming Board Chairman **Dr. James Peltier** also recognized PAR Senior Research Associate **Ty Keller**, who is retiring this year after 34 years of service.

The morning panel session, entitled "The 2005 Legislature: Short Session, Long on Issues," featured **Rep. Karen D. Carter** of New Orleans, Governor's Office Chief of Staff **Andy Kopplin**, political columnist **John Maginnis**, **Sen. Gerald Theunissen** of Jennings and PAR President **Jim Brandt**. Discussion covered a wide array of issues, including sin taxes and teacher pay, the $400 million hole in the executive budget, accountability in education, Stelly Plan tax reforms and healthcare reforms on the horizon.

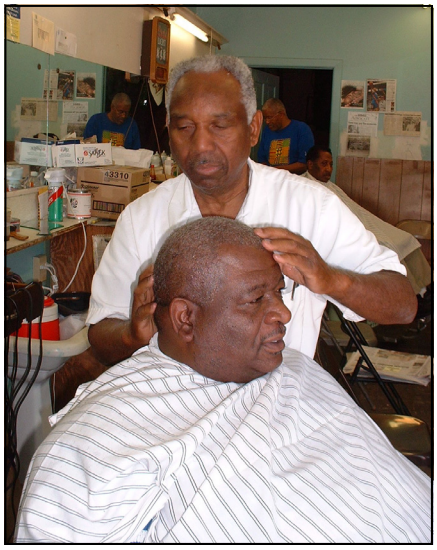
PAR elects officers and Board members

Dr. James Peltier of Thibodaux 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 22. Peltier has served the organization in a number of volunteer leadership roles over the years.

The PAR Board also elected **David Eustis**, Senior Vice President, Whitney National Bank in New Orleans as Vice Chairman; **Donna Saurage** of Baton Rouge as

See page 2

Longtime member serves in many ways



Member Robert Parker runs a barber shop in Old South Baton Rouge, yet finds the time to contribute to furthering the PAR mission.

In focusing on state government, PAR's work is fairly far removed from the grassroots of Louisiana culture. But in the eyes of one longtime member, PAR serves an important role in improving the lives of citizens one neighborhood at a time.

"PAR informs the people, and the more you learn about a problem the more you can put toward solving that problem. It's a responsibility we all have to try to maintain our democracy and the many freedoms we enjoy in America," said **Robert Parker,** a Baton Rouge barber and civic leader who joined PAR in the 1980s.

Parker is also involved with The Chamber of Greater Baton Rouge, Youth and Adult Political Organization Inc., Community Improvement Inc. and the Foundation for Historical Louisiana. In addition, he sells recycling products and a special brew of sassafras tea to raise money for a college scholarship program he is trying to establish.

A native of West Feliciana, he moved to Baton Rouge after barber school and settled in Old South Baton Rouge. Throughout the years, he watched his neighborhood decline with the influx of drugs and crime. But, being the activist he is, Parker embarked on a mission to clean up his block. Walking door to door on Sundays after church, Parker and some other neighbors collected input from residents of the area to identify the range of problems they faced. They then contracted with off-duty police officers to weed out the criminal element. Today, he is proud to say that there are no drug houses within sight of his home.

This is the sort of grassroots civic involvement that Parker says is essential to maintaining a high-quality, democratic culture. Personal involvement is key.

"Problems become more of a problem when people know about them but are not concerned enough to join an organization to solve them," he said.

Following that ideal, Parker serves on PAR's research committee and closely follows the research PAR conducts. Going above and beyond the call for involvement, he also contributes to PAR through his special treatment of the PAR staff. He often personally delivers home-baked treats, spring water and old-fashioned bottles of Coca-Cola.

"We must maintain good leadership (in government) to keep democracy alive," he said. PAR's work contributes toward that maintenance, and supporting PAR is one of the many ways Parker lives up to his own personal civic responsibility.

New leadership assumes role on PAR Board of Directors

From page 1

Secretary; and, **Gordon Pugh**, Senior Partner, Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson in Baton Rouge as Treasurer.

In addition to the officers, the membership also elected **Tim McFadden**, Vice President, State Farm Insurance Company in Baton Rouge, to serve a three-year term on the PAR Board of Directors. **Rand H. Falbaum**, owner/CEO, Gordon Inc. in Shreveport, was elected to the Board in January.

Re-elected members of the Board of Directors include: **James Bradford**, Manager and Government Affairs Representative, Smurfit-Stone, Hodge; **Donna Carville**, Public Affairs Manager, Dow Chemical, Plaquemine; **Beth Courtney**, President/CEO, Louisiana Public Broadcasting, Baton Rouge; **Fred Palmer**, Manager-External Affairs, EPAmericas, Shell, New Orleans; **Fred Loy**, Executive Director, Committee of 100 for Economic Development, Baton Rouge; **Rich Mohring**, Plant Manager, ExxonMobil Chemical Company, Baton Rouge; **Bill Oliver**, President, BellSouth-LA, New Orleans; **Renae Conley**, President/CEO, Entergy/Louisiana, Baton Rouge; and, **George Wilson**, President/CEO, Barriere Construction, New Orleans.

PAR Officers pictured from left are Secretary Donna Saurage, Chairman Dr. James Peltier, Past Chairman George D. Nelson Jr., President Jim Brandt, Vice Chairman David Eustis and Chairman of the Nominating Committee Burton Weaver Jr.

PAR's 55th Annual Conference and Luncheon

LEFT: *Robyn Ekings (far right) introduces panelists for the morning session. Panelists shown are (left to right) Rep. Karen D. Carter, Chief of Staff Andy Kopplin and columnist John Maginnis.*

ABOVE: *Board Chairman Dr. James Peltier thanks outgoing Board Chairman George D. Nelson Jr. for his years of service to PAR.*

LEFT: *The luncheon crowd dines before keynote speaker Governor Kathleen Blanco delivers her speech.*

ABOVE: *Retiring Senior Research Associate Ty Keller receives a standing ovation for his 34 years of service to PAR.*

LEFT: *PAR President Jim Brandt introduces moderator Robyn Ekings at the morning panel session.*

Many thanks go out to our presenting and table sponsors.

Presenting Sponsors

C.J. BROWN REALTORS Since 1917 — A LATTER & BLUM COMPANY — LATTER & BLUM INC/REALTORS® Since 1916

COX COMMUNICATIONS

W&T OFFSHORE INCORPORATED

CLECO

Doré energy CORPORATION

Gold Table Sponsors

AARP
AmSouth Bank
Atmos Energy
Barriere Construction Co., LLC
BellSouth
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana
Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, LLP
Entergy Louisiana
ExxonMobil
FMOL Health System
Jones Walker
Jay Handelman
Hibernia National Bank
Gloria Kabacoff
Pres Kabacoff
Kilpatrick Life Insurance Company
Kinsey Interests Inc.
La Capitol Federal Credit Union
Buddy Leach
LAMAR Advertising
Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians
Louisiana Companies
LUBA Workers' Comp
New Orleans Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau
Performance Contractors Inc.
Mr. and Mrs. R. Hunter Pierson
Donna and Norman Saurage
Shell
Mr. and Mrs. Joe D. Smith
Smurfit-Stone
Taylor Energy Company
Taylor, Porter, Brooks & Phillips, LLP
Turner Industries Group, LLC
WRKF Public Radio

Silver Table Sponsors

Bank One/JP Morgan Chase
CenturyTel
Chaffe, McCall, Phillips, Toler & Sarpy, LLP
ChevronTexaco
Correro, Fishman, Haygood, Phelps, Walmsley & Casteix, LLP
DEMCO
Dow Chemical
Freeport-McMoRan/Crescent Technology Inc.
HCA-Delta Division
Harris, Deville & Associates Inc.
KPMG, LLP
Louisiana Coca-Cola Bottling Company
Louisiana Municipal Association
Louisiana State University
Virginia and John Noland
Pennington Biomedical Research
Roy O. Martin Lumber Co., LLC
State Farm Insurance
Thibodaux Regional Medical Center

PAR Research

Recently Released Reports and Commentaries

Analysis: ***Public Employee Retirement: A Time for Change*** This report summarized PAR's extensive analysis of the state's public employee retirement systems and recommended major reforms that could help to ease retirement debt for the future.

Commentary: ***Property Tax Bills Threaten to Undermine Local Taxing Capacity*** Proposals to cap property tax assessments, liberalize assessment freezes, increase the homestead exemption and eliminate taxing bodies' authority to roll up millages following mandatory roll back after reassessment would all be extremely detrimental to local self-government.

Commentary: ***PAR Says Keep Stelly Plan on Track*** The Stelly Plan was no one's idea of the perfect tax reform; however it was an important first step toward a more rational tax structure by providing greater equity and stability.

Studies Underway

State's Liability Issues Many judgments against the state, including some with very high damage awards, wait in line to be paid. This study will examine present and future liability of the state, touching on the major areas of exposure that include road hazards and medical malpractice.

State Aid to Local Governments This study will examine state aid for local infrastructure projects. The study will focus on local projects in the state capital outlay budget and the urban and rural development funds.

East Baton Rouge Parish School System: A Desegregation Follow-up Study PAR is continuing to monitor developments in the school system. This year's segment of the ongoing study will focus on performance gaps and successes at the school level.

Check our Web site for updates on the 2005 legislative session and the latest news coverage of our reports and commentaries — www.la-par.org.