



COMMENTARY

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PAR Calls Vetoes a Good First Step

Gov. Bobby Jindal has vetoed more budgetary earmarks than any governor has in the past. After striking through \$16 million of line-item amendments for legislators' local projects, around \$39 million in local earmarks was left in the operating budget. However, with no scoring mechanism or uniform evaluation procedure for each local project granted funding, the public is left to wonder why those were left in the budget to compete with statewide needs for state tax dollars.

The Jindal approach to cutting budget fat took several steps in the right direction. He released a list of broad criteria during the session to warn legislators of the types of projects that would be cut. Then, citing those criteria, he cut more than \$9 million from the 2008 supplemental budget and \$16 million from the 2009 operations budget.

This was a good start toward more efficiently pairing state dollars with state needs. The next steps should be to:

- establish a new policy to veto every local earmark from future state budgets, and
- establish a revolving loan and grant fund that would replace all line-item funding for local projects and programs in the capital outlay and operations budgets.

The process for awarding funds through the new program should be objective, rational and transparent. It should require full accountability for the spending and meaningful performance evaluation for all programs receiving funds. This would force local governments and non-governmental organizations to compete for state funding on a level playing field. Such a reform would mark a major shift in budget-making for Louisiana by eliminating much of the backroom deal-making the current process encourages.

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