



Everything New Orleans

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top of the news

Libertarian group gives Jindal an 'A' on fiscal issues

Governor stays on the road for GOP candidates

Melancon launches 2-minute ad against Vitter

### AROUND THE CAPITOL

Governor given high marks on managing state's money

A libertarian Washington, D.C., think tank last week gave Gov. Bobby Jindal an "A" grade for his fiscal stewardship, making him one of just four chief executives around the country to earn that designation. The report from the Cato Institute says Jindal "has a solid record on both his tax and his spending policies" and cited his support for the \$350 million income-tax cut that resulted from the Legislature's 2008 decision to roll back the Stelly Plan income-tax increase. The report could bolster Jindal against critics, including state Treasurer John Kennedy and House Speaker Jim Tucker, R-Algiers, who say the governor hasn't been aggressive enough in cutting the budget and preparing the state for next year's \$1.6 billion budget shortfall. Joining Jindal on the "A" list are South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford and Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, both Republicans, and Democratic Gov. Joe Manchin of West Virginia.

Jindal to put in appearance in key presidential state

Gov. Bobby Jindal plans to travel to New Hampshire this month to campaign on behalf of a Republican gubernatorial candidate there. Jindal will attend two events in the Granite State on Oct. 14 on behalf of John Stephen, who is challenging Democratic incumbent John Lynch. Jindal will headline a fundraiser on Stephen's behalf and participate in a public campaign event, according to the Manchester Union-Leader, where it was first reported. While Jindal has campaigned for numerous GOP candidates across the country, the fact that he's traveling to New Hampshire, site of the first-in-the-nation presidential primary, is sure to raise speculation that he is plotting a future beyond the Governor's Mansion. Several potential GOP candidates have already campaigned with Stephen, including former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Jindal's chief of staff Timmy Teepell has been on leave since August while he consults for the Republican Governors Association.

Melancon brandishes 'forgotten crimes' ad

Trailing by double digits in recent polls, Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Charlie Melancon last week unveiled a two-minute campaign ad that attacks Republican incumbent David Vitter for his role in the D.C. Madam prostitution scandal. The "forgotten crimes" ad is an abridged version of a Web-only ad the Louisiana Democratic Party released during the summer and comes after weeks in which the Melancon campaign has largely stayed off the campaign airwaves. The commercial,

rare for its two-minute length and the explicit nature of its subject matter, comes as numerous polls have shown Melancon trailing Vitter leading up to the Nov. 2 election. Most recently, a Democratic poll had Vitter ahead by 10 points, while a Republican-leaning pollster showed the incumbent with an 18-point advantage. In the commercial, produced to look and sound like a true-crime TV documentary, the narrator reminds viewers that Vitter's phone number was found in the logs of a Washington escort service, and also quotes a "former French Quarter prostitute" who claims she had a regular dalliance with Vitter. Near the end, the narrator says, "we've only scratched the surface" and that Vitter "has been let off the hook by powerful interests in Washington and Louisiana." Though Vitter has never directly admitted patronizing prostitutes, he has admitted to a "very serious sin" and has said he has been forgiven by his family and his God. Vitter's campaign spokesman Luke Bolar declined to comment on the ad except to remind voters that Melancon said in July that he wasn't planning to make Vitter's sexual indiscretions a part of his campaign.

#### Housing advocates sound alarm about Gulf Coast

Five years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, some low-income people along the Gulf Coast are still without decent, affordable housing, and last week housing advocates were on Capitol Hill for a briefing on what remains to be done and what Congress can do. "We're here to urge Congress to look to fill the unmet needs that still remain," said Marla Williams, executive director for the Louisiana Housing Alliance. "There's a misperception that five years later, everybody's been taken care of, and that couldn't be farther from the truth." According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the Katrina Housing Group, affordable rental housing remains in short supply for people with very low incomes on the Gulf Coast. Linda Couch, senior vice president for policy for the coalition, said housing advocates also would like to see a lame-duck session of the Senate pass legislation written by Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., that would provide two critical fixes for Gulf Opportunity Zone tax credits, designed to encourage the development of affordable housing in the region after the 2005 storms. Couch said they hope the next Congress will finally get to long-awaited reform of the Stafford Act to heighten protections for the poor, including establishing a post-disaster rental repair program that helps communities respond more quickly in a future disaster and to require that future disaster recovery housing money be administered through HUD's HOME program, to be sure they are not diverted for nonhousing uses.

#### State agriculture chief plans to seek second term

Agriculture Commissioner Mike Strain, a Republican who in 2007 ended former Democratic commissioner Bob Odom's 28-year reign in the office, will run for re-election next year. Strain, a veterinarian, has scheduled a campaign fundraiser for Tuesday in Baton Rouge. No other major candidates have announced a challenge to the incumbent so far. He oversaw significant budget cuts at the department before they were mandated more recently by the state's tight finances. But he might face a fight during the 2011 election year to keep intact the various funds that support the farming, food and retailer regulatory system that his agency operates. Most of the funds are financed by service fees or fines charged to business or farms. There could be attempts to tap them during the spring legislative session to patch up the state's looming budget shortfall.

staying in touch

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## TRACKING BILLS

Citizens can find the Louisiana legislative home page on the Internet at [www.legis.state.la.us](http://www.legis.state.la.us). Information on legislators, committee assignments, schedules and bills is available, as well as information on services for people with disabilities. The Public Update Legislative Services Line or PULS Line, is available toll-free (Louisiana only) 800.256.3793 outside Baton Rouge. Legislative staff will answer questions about bills, direct callers to committee information and explain aspects of the legislative process.

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