

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 14, 2009

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BLUEPRINT LOUISIANA ADDS TO REFORM AGENDA

Blueprint Louisiana, a citizen-driven, nonpartisan effort to identify and implement essential changes to fundamentally improve the state, is adding a “New Economy” component to its reform agenda.

“Our belief is steadfast — let’s continue creating the state we deserve,” said Blueprint Louisiana Chairman Sean Reilly, Chief Operating Officer and President of Baton Rouge-based Lamar Advertising Company’s Outdoor Division. “We recognize the challenging fiscal issues currently facing the state, but the difficult budget outlook doesn’t mean we shouldn’t continue to promote good ideas to improve our state.”

Blueprint will advocate for the “New Economy” component in the upcoming legislative session and beyond if needed:

- **Create a Knowledge-Based, Innovation-Driven Economy.** Louisiana must begin now to build and position its economy to grow and thrive in the years and decades ahead. This involves two steps: (1) shift to a performance-based formula to fund higher education — to reward the results we need to transform our economy; and (2) create a Louisiana Research Alliance (modeled after highly successful research alliance organizations in other states) to guide state investments to support diversification and growth of Louisiana’s economy. In today’s world, economic development and postsecondary education must be directly linked.

“By emphasizing degrees and certificates, in addition to workforce alignment and external research, the proposed new funding formula will help Louisiana meet the challenge of competing and succeeding in a global, knowledge-based economy,” Reilly said. “We also believe the creation of a Louisiana Research Alliance can help elevate the importance of research and development, technology and innovation to Louisiana’s economic future.”

Reilly noted a phased-in approach to the performance-based funding formula is reasonable, establishing the needed, systemic reform while recognizing the challenging fiscal conditions that have signaled proposed cuts to higher education funding. In addition, Blueprint will recommend creating a temporary design council that develops the framework for the strategic alliance and reports back to the Legislature early next year.

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Just as Blueprint's original agenda was formulated with the help of Louisiana citizens in the spring and summer of 2007, the "New Economy" component received broad-based support in nine meetings the organization held around the state in November 2008. The specifics related to the performance-based funding formula and research alliance were compiled once again from extensive research — reviews of existing reports and studies and discussions with multiple subject matter experts.

As during the 2007 election cycle, Blueprint also will share this information with state legislators and ask for their support. When they were running for the Legislature in 2007, approximately 82 percent of the members of the State Senate and 71 percent of the members of the House of Representatives signed the original contract to support the Blueprint Agenda.

"Since we are adding to the original Blueprint Agenda, we are providing this new information to legislators and asking them to indicate their support by signing either a contract addendum, if they previously signed the Blueprint contract, or if they didn't sign the original Blueprint contract, giving them another chance to sign an updated contract," Reilly said. "We are grateful for the support we have received from legislators and look forward to continuing to work with them in the upcoming session."

After several key accomplishments in 2008, Blueprint will also continue to pursue the remainder of its original agenda items:

- Funding for LA 4 expansion, approximately \$10.5 million for fiscal year 2009-10
- Funding from the FY 2008 surplus for centers of excellence within the Louisiana Community and Technical College System to meet workforce needs in key, in-demand sectors.
- Funding from the FY 2008 surplus for additional transportation needs and coastal restoration and hurricane protection projects.
- Continued pursuit of a health care redesign in the state to better serve the uninsured and more efficiently utilize providers and available funding.

Established in 2006, Blueprint Louisiana is a citizen-driven effort to identify and implement essential changes to fundamentally improve Louisiana. The group's original vision for a better Louisiana focused on major governmental reforms in the areas of ethics, education, workforce development, health care, transportation and coastal restoration and hurricane protection. The nonpartisan effort is led and supported by community and business leaders from across the state. More than 3,000 citizens and 40 organizations have indicated their support for the Blueprint Agenda.

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