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Our view: Celebrate this, Louisiana, and stand strong

Louisiana residents -- and all of those who grudgingly left their home state to seek a better life elsewhere -- should take five this morning to enjoy a rare and welcome piece of news: Louisiana is at the top of one of the "good lists."

Relish that thought for a moment. It's much needed and long overdue.

With new Gov. Bobby Jindal at the helm, the good ship Louisiana has started to right its course. Today it is on its way to having the most effective, most meaningful ethics laws in the nation.

Lawmakers endorsed Jindal's sweeping reform in the just-ended special legislative session, and the paperwork awaits only the governor's signature. When that happens -- with much fanfare and national headlines, we hope -- Louisiana will then be known on Main Street and Wall Street as a place that has gotten serious about ending its legacy of nods, winks and back-room deals.

Jindal made ethics reform his centerpiece from the start -- during his gubernatorial campaign and as he entered the Governor's Mansion. It was his Job 1 on a long list of jobs to be done, and rightly so. From this, so many good things will flow, and that cannot happen soon enough.

The new requirements will cover a range of issues that affect all state legislators and most state elected and appointed officials. They also cover parish and municipal officials and appointees.

Judges are exempted from the laws as endorsed by the Legislature, but only because the judicial branch cited the constitutional separation of powers among the branches of government. It has stated in writing that it will adopt comparable requirements, no later than June 15. Please, do.

The legislation requires that public officials disclose all sources of income, real estate holdings and debts of more than \$10,000; it prohibits lawmakers and executive branch officials from getting contracts for state-financed or disaster-related work; and it requires lobbyists to disclose their sources of income and limits what they can spend to wine-and-dine lawmakers to no more than \$50 per elected official, per meal.

What citizens should remember is this: This is landmark legislation. It goes a long way toward pushing government into the sunshine where it belongs and prohibiting public servants from dipping into the taxpayers' pockets.

Gov. Jindal's signature is a forgone conclusion -- thank you, Governor -- so what needs to happen next is vital, which is this: enforcement.

Louisiana has no shortage of laws, legislation, statutes and regulations. What's missing -- and always has been missing -- is enforcement of them.

Put that down. As good as this legislation is -- and it is good -- its legacy is tied to enforcement.

The smart money is on Gov. Jindal, who has shown that he means it when he says this will become a new state -- New Louisiana.
