

# Louisiana Commission on Civic Education

Post Office Box 94183  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
Telephone: (225) 342-6415



**Commission Staff**  
Sherri Breaux  
Chief Legislative Researcher

Tammy Crain-Waldrop  
Researcher

Cathy Ortego  
Administrative Secretary

## MINUTES November 9, 2010

### I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m. in Senate Committee Room E in the state capitol building, Baton Rouge, Louisiana by Chairman Dale Bayard.

### II. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll and the following was established:

| <b>Present</b>                                 | <b>Absent</b>               |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Dale Bayard, Chairman                          | John Alexander              |
| Jim Brandt                                     | Rep. Austin Badon           |
| Beth Courtney, Vice-Chairman                   | Fredell Butler              |
| Patrick Dobard                                 | Peggy Cotogno               |
| Senator Yvonne Dorsey                          | Representative Steve Carter |
| Barry Erwin                                    | Ashley Herad                |
| Brenda Hodge                                   | Lou Munson                  |
| Camm Morton                                    | Allen Semien                |
| Malcolm Myer                                   | Anita Sexton                |
| Lawrence Narcisse                              | Pam Wagner                  |
| Jeanne Johnston (proxy for Senator Ben Nevers) |                             |
| Janet Pace                                     |                             |
| Stafford Palmieri                              | <b>Staff Present:</b>       |
| Kathleen Randall                               | Sherri Breaux               |
|  | Cathy Ortego                |
|  | Tammy Crain-Waldrop         |

Chairman Bayard introduced Stafford Olivia Palmieri who will serve on the commission as the designee for the Governor and Camm Morton who will serve as designee for Louisiana Serve Commission.

### **III. DISCUSSION**

Tammy Crain-Waldrop presented the annual report to the commission. Malcolm Myer made a motion to approve the annual report. The motion passed unanimously.

Nancy Beben, representing the Louisiana Department of Education, explained how Act 327 (House Bill 1029) will be implemented. Act 327 increases the civics requirement from one semester to two semesters; the Act changes civics from 1/2 credit to one credit unit; Free Enterprise becomes an elective rather than a required course and also requires that a section on Free Enterprise be included in the civics class. She pointed out that the department has developed a state wide curriculum. She said that in January, the new standards will be available and she would appreciate feed back from the commission. She added that plans are being made to provide professional training for the teachers and these standards will be implemented in the 2014 - 2014 school year. She concluded by saying that funding for the program will be the biggest challenge.

Beth Courtney offered to have a link put on the Louisiana Public Broadcasting's website.

Sherri Breaux explained that since the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education has oversight over the Legislative Youth Advisory Council she wanted to give the commission an update on their activities. She referred to the annual report highlighting the council's initiatives such as Public Square, Government Day, Leadership Award and the Legislators Back To School Program.

Malcolm Myer questioned if there was a problem getting some of the districts to apply for membership. Sherri explained that previously there had been a problem in District 2. She rectified the problem by contacting school and civic based organizations in the district and they were able to reach interested students.

Sherri asked the commission to change the date of the application dead line and to make minor changes to the essay questions on the application. Malcolm Myer made a motion to change the date from April 15<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup>. This was unanimously approved by the commission.

Malcolm Myer suggested that in an effort to reach more students, organizations such as "Big Buddy" and the "Boys and Girls Clubs" should be contacted.

Beth Courtney suggested that a booth should be set up at a national teachers conference to promote the Legislative Youth Advisory Council and enroll more interest.

Kathleen Randal said that Representative Cedric Redmond would be open to any kind of civic endeavor.

#### **IV. PRESENTATIONS**

Al Godoy, with Louisiana Public Broadcasting, made a presentation on Louisiana Square. He said that Louisiana Public Square, which is in its 7<sup>th</sup> year, is a panel of experts along with randomly selected participants from all walks of life who come together to discuss a topic that is of interest to Louisiana citizens. He went on to say that recent topics included: Immigration Reform in Louisiana; Church and the Bayou State; Louisiana Grown: Agriculture Across the State and Crisis in the Gulf. He added that having two of the members of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council for each segment has added to the conversation and the debate. He concluded by saying that 17 members of the Council took part last year.

Beth Courtney said that she and the experts on the panel were impressed with the questions that were asked by the council members. She thanked Sherri Breaux for her efforts in this endeavor.

Sherri Breaux said that the Legislative Youth Advisory Council was fortunate to be able to partner with the World Peace Day Committee for the World Peace Day Event which was held on October, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the state capitol. She explained that the members collected art work from schools across the state which included poems, essays, pictures and paintings. The art work was an interpretation of what world peace meant to them and was displayed in the capitol rotunda. Sherri showed a slide presentation of pictures from the event. This included performances from high school orchestras, dances, art and presentations. She concluded by saying that she has contacted the Louisiana Art Educators Association so that all art teachers will have the opportunity to have their students participate in next year's event.

Cathy Ortego gave an update and highlights of the Legislators Back To School Program. She said that the Louisiana Senate ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation by having 32 of 39 senators participate in the Legislators Back To School Program by teaching one or more classes on representative democracy. She reported that ninety two classes were taught which reached approximately 3800 students. She said that to date, the senate has 50% participation for this school year.

Cathy showed a power point presentation highlighting the year's accomplishments of the Legislators Back To School Program. Pictures included senators teaching classes in their district as well as the home school event at the capitol. She mentioned that Senator Jody Amedee sends a letter to every school in his district offering to teach a class on representative democracy to all of the fourth graders.

Cathy pointed out that for the first time the Legislative Youth Advisory Council took the Legislators Back To School Program as one of their initiatives. She went on to explain that this proved to be another opportunity for them to interact with their legislators by personally inviting them to teach a class at their school.

She explained that the Senate and the House worked together to reach home schooled students by having a Home School Event as part of the Legislators Back To School Program. Senator Dan Claitor, Representative Steve Carter and Representative Foil taught a class in the capitol on representative democracy to area home school students. The students were engaged and had numerous questions for the legislators. Alex LeBlanc and Hannah Matherne, members of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council

Group shared personal experiences that impacted their lives by being actively involved in their state and community. Since Alex and Hannah are home schooled, they had an enormous impact on these home school students. As they shared their first hand knowledge in working with legislators, they clearly demonstrated that their voices do count. They encouraged the students to get involved in their communities and their state.

In an effort to promote the program, Cathy explained that she works closely with Brenda Hodge and her staff to obtain pictures and information of the school visit in order to have news articles written. Cathy concluded by saying, "It is our hope that these news articles will show other schools that the legislators are accessible and willing to come to their schools to teach and the end result will be that more students will be reached."

Brenda Hodge showed an in house training promotional video of the Legislators Back To School Program that was a collaboration of the efforts of Cathy Ortego, Damien Heard and Morgan Blanchard. She explained that with term limited legislators, this video will be helpful in orientation for new legislators who are not familiar with the program.

Kathleen Randal noted that this is a win/win program for legislators, teachers and students. She said that to date the House has 14 representatives who have either taught a class or has scheduled one. She concluded by saying that Representative John Schroder from Covington has embraced this program by visiting the five largest schools in his district from private, public to charter.

Sherri Breaux recognized Senator Yvonne Dorsey, a member of the commission, by saying that Senator Dorsey is always faithful in teaching classes in her district.

Dale Bayard said that he serves on the Louisiana Environmental Education Commission and invited Mallory Martin to make a presentation at their next meeting. Mallory Martin, a member of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council and Venny Cannada, who serve on Future Leaders of America's Gulf (FLAG), made a presentation.

A video depicting the creation of FLAG and its mission was shown. These teenagers from Houma are concerned about the coastal environmental after the BP oil spill and wanted to have a voice in the recovery. They started meeting to voice their concerns and plan how to educate other teens in the area about the importance of the seafood and oil industry to their lives and culture. They reached out to other teens across the nation on Face Book and the Internet to inform them of Louisiana's role in their lives. In two months they had 300 members, a website and a name.

Venny Cannada said, "It is important to keep teens updated on what is going on in the gulf. FLAG is students educating students, helping them understand the issues of the future. On a national level, FLAG educates, raises awareness, and influences public opinion regarding issues that will shape the future of the Gulf Coast." He went on to stress that they want to convey to the public the importance of the natural, coastal, and human resources. He said that Louisiana challenges are: Drilling moratorium, the eroding coastal wetland, GOMESA bill acceleration of offshore oil royalties, negative perception of the seafood

industry and tourism. He concluded by saying that FLAG is a fresh voice - a youth voice to address these concerns and issues.

Mallory Martin gave a summary of the activities that FLAG has been involved in since its inception. The activities are as follows: Presentation to the Christian Leadership Institute; Gulf Youth Forum which aired on HTV Bayou Time; Rally for Economic Survival which was held at the Cajun Dome to push to stop the drilling moratorium; FLAG interviews which are posted on the FLAG website; and Louisiana Public Broadcasting - Louisiana Public Square - Crisis in the Gulf. She listed the meetings attended by FLAG as: SCIA meetings, BOEMRE Public Meetings, Caucus of Coastal State Legislators meetings, HTV Bi-Weekly Segment, Key Club District Rally, Terrebonne Parish Student Advisory Meeting and Lt Governor Retreat Organizations.

Venny Cannda added that FLAG partnered with the Advance Baton Rouge Charter School Association and received a grant from Learn and Serve. He went on to say that the service program has reached out to 1600 students in 5 schools. He said, "We have planned a Leadership Forum on November 11<sup>th</sup> in Houma, Louisiana at the Quality Inn. This is a starting point for student involvement. We want the students to understand that coastal erosion directly impact us and we should educate ourselves so that we can deal with this issue in the future." He invited the commission to attend. He said, "On a National level FLAG has a distance education through Terrebonne Parish Library so that we can communicate with other states about different issues. FLAG took part in the Southern Association of Student Councils in North Carolina. Ms. Denise Ortego is our contact person in the EPA and got us involved in the South West Region of the United States EE Roundtable Meeting. It includes Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma. At this meeting, we will stress that Louisiana is the number one oil producing and seafood industry and the challenges Louisiana is facing with the oil spill." He concluded by saying that FLAG's website is [www.laflag.org](http://www.laflag.org) and is updated regularly.

Beth Courtney asked the students if they would be interested in being involved in a project, Gulf Coast News Bureau, which would last for a year and includes a grant. She said, "It involves all the public news and radio stations along the gulf and they are in need of a youth division. You could possibly be on-line correspondents." Both students affirmed that they would welcome the opportunity.

Sherri Breaux said that she had several conversations with John Alexander, the state coordinator for Project Citizen, as well as other regional Project Citizen Coordinators in reference to creating a civics consortium where civic related information would be placed on the website from all branches of government. Sherri asked the commission if it is something they would be interested in doing. Dale Bayard agreed that this would be beneficial and made a motion to follow through on this idea. There being no opposition, the motion passed.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Bayard adjourned the meeting at 4:49 p.m.

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Dale Bayard, Chairman

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October 26, 2011

*Note: These minutes were approved and signed at the October 26, 2011 meeting.*