



LOUISIANA SENATE

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CONTACT: Senate Communication Office

Phone: 225.342.6270

LOUISIANA STATE SENATE ADJOURNS SECOND SPECIAL SESSION

LAWMAKERS AGREE ON IMPORTANT SOLUTIONS RELATIVE TO HURRICANE RECOVERY, THE UNEMPLOYMENT TRUST FUND and COVID-19

Today, the Louisiana legislature adjourned its 2020 Second Extraordinary Session. This session, the third law-making session of the year, was called by leadership in September to address the state's unemployment trust fund, Hurricanes Laura and Delta recovery, and on-going issues relative to COVID-19. Senate President Page Cortez says that he and his colleagues were able to work together to come up with solutions to some of the most dire issues facing the state.

The legislature's first priority was shoring up funding to aid in hurricane recovery and relief. To that effect, lawmakers approved \$1.4 million in funding for local governments in Calcasieu, Cameron, and Jefferson Davis Parishes. \$20 million was also steered toward funding the construction, repair, and restoration of buildings on the McNeese State University and Sowela Technical Community College campuses.

As protecting students impacted by the disaster was also high on the legislature's to-do list, a bill that ensures K-12 schools remain whole in the Minimum Foundation Program formula, as well as another that modifies TOPS eligibility requirements for impacted students, were approved.

The legislature also focused on stabilizing the state's unemployment trust fund. In March 2020, the state's unemployment trust fund contained over \$1 billion. As businesses were forced to close and workers were left jobless because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trust fund was quickly drained, forcing the state to seek assistance from the federal government to meet the demand for unemployment benefits.

Without action from the legislature, the depletion of the trust fund would have required employers to pay more taxes and program participants would have seen a

reduction in their benefits. To avoid this, the legislature agreed on a package of bills that suspends these impacts through the 2021 calendar year.

The on-going issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic were also a major issue at the session. One of the most hotly debated topics was how emergency declarations are handled and whether the legislature should have any input. Legislators did agree on one measure dealing with this topic. That bill outlines a procedure the legislature can follow to revoke individual sections of a renewed executive order under certain circumstances.

“We did what we came here to do,” said President Cortez. “We secured funding for those areas most heavily impacted by the recent hurricanes. We agreed on a package of bills to protect businesses and the unemployed. And, we passed several measures critical to the state’s response to COVID-19, including a compromise on how emergency declarations are handled. I want to thank my fellow Senators as well as our colleagues in the House of Representatives for their efforts. It has been a tough year for Louisiana, but we are resilient and we will continue to come together as we recover and rebuild.”

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