



News Release

LOUISIANA STATE SENATE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
6/3/2023

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE ADVANCES BUDGET BILLS

BATON ROUGE, La. – The Senate Finance Committee today advanced House Bill 1, the general appropriations bill that funds state services (including education) for the next fiscal year, and the supplemental appropriations bill (HB 560) as the 2023 Legislative Session rapidly comes to a close at the end of next week.

The budget bills include funding for all state agencies and contains \$284 M to fund a \$2,000 pay raise for teachers as well as a \$1,000 increase for certified educational support staff. The budget package pays down \$441 M in pension debts adding \$120 M to savings accounts available to future Legislatures. It also contains more than \$1B in capital outlay projects including improvements to roads and bridges, maintenance on state buildings at colleges and universities, and coastal protection priorities.

The committee’s action also set aside funds to reduce homeowner insurance premiums by providing grant dollars to fortify roofs as well as incentive dollars designed to create more competition among insurance companies to reduce home owners’ insurance rates. Additionally, the bills added \$50 M towards port projects throughout the state and directed \$80M to improving and updating local sewer and water systems in mostly rural areas of Louisiana.

Senators say the initiatives included in the budget package will give taxpayer dollars, currently sitting in the savings accounts in the treasury, back to the citizens of the state for an improved quality of life.

“This committee has done a lot for the future of Louisiana today,” said Finance Committee Chairman Bodi White. “The fact is, we’ve also done a lot to move the state forward in years to come.”

Senate President Page Cortez says to accomplish the goal of giving money back to taxpayers, the House of Representatives must now pass a resolution (SCR 3) to raise the state’s expenditure limit. The expenditure limit is a constitutional provision added in the 1990’s to reduce the growth of ordinary operating expenses by state government. The measure never contemplated excess surpluses of cash sitting in the state treasury without the authority to spend it on non-recurring, one-time investments. The provision requires a 2/3 vote of both chambers to effectively lift the

limit and spend the savings on one-time projects. It has been successfully adopted in the Senate by a vote of 39-0 with 34 co-authors earlier this session.

“When you can take a balanced approach to paying down debt, increasing savings for the future and providing critical services to the taxpayers of the state to improve their lives, you do it,” said President Cortez. “While the action of the Senate Finance Committee does change the House’s versions of the budget bills, I feel confident our House colleagues strongly support teacher pay as well as giving money back to taxpayers. We are glad we were able to advance the budget process and we look forward to further discussion as we have always had a great relationship with the Speaker and leadership in that chamber.”

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