

SUNDAY TALK

Q&A: Kleckley and Senate president have 'great working relationship'

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We'll still have tenure, but in order to get tenure, you have to be an effective teacher and you can lose tenure by being an ineffective teacher. That's just some of the proposals that he's coming out and he's willing to discuss.

evaluation process where you're going to evaluate teachers based on the class they have at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year to make sure they were an effective teacher. (If they are,) they don't have to worry about losing their tenure. Now if they become ineffective,

they can lose their tenure and after so many years, you could possibly lose your certification, and I think that's the way it should go, and that's what needs to happen.

Chuck, you mentioned Senator Alario. Over the past few years, the House has built a reputation of being a little more fiscally conservative than the Senate, and people may say a little more fiscally responsible. What you do in the House, how can that be shepherded over to the Senate to see that they don't gum up the works?

I think the start of it is that Senator Alario and I have a great relationship. I've had a great relationship with him since when I walked in the House chamber. We've had a great working relationship since I became Speaker and he became President of the Senate. I expect that to continue. I expect us to have that great relationship, I expect us to have an open line of communication and discuss these issues and talk them through.

There's going to be some differences. That's the human nature of the responsibilities. But I think it's going to be a great relationship that we're going to have, and we're going to work together and at the end of day, we'll have a budget that works and works for the state of Louisiana that's going to be balanced. That's what our constitution says. When we adjourn the first part of June, we have to have a balanced budget.

There was some conflict over the last four years as you are well aware of between the speaker and the (Senate) president. It looks like Jindal is trying to avoid that this time around.

I think everybody has their own management style. (Former Speaker) Jim Tucker had his own management style. (Former Senate President) Joel Chaisson had his management style. I have mine, and Senator Alario has his.

I think John Alario has been around 40 years now.



BRAD PUCKETT / AMERICAN PRESS
New Louisiana Speaker of the House Chuck Kleckley's intention is to hold weekly news briefings.

He's been around the Capitol that's 80 years old. I told him that the other day: "Do you realize you've been here half as long as this building has been here?" So, he has a lot of knowledge. He's told me that he's living history. He's got a lot of knowledge and a lot of experience, and he's been free to share it with me.

If I've had any questions for him, he's been very open. He hasn't hesitated to help and he's told me time and time again, if there's anything that he can help me with, he'll do it. He's been very, very professional. I have no complaints at all.

Tucker had some of these weekly news briefings. Do you think you'll do some of that?

That is my intent. As a matter of fact, I have a meeting with Sheila (McCant), the public relations officer for the House, I think Thursday, and that's one of the things that are on our agenda to discuss those weekly meetings.

He helped explain some of the stuff that went on and why it went on. It was helpful background.

She said they were really productive. ... I want to be open. I've got 104 members out there. I've met with almost all of them and told them that one of my goals as speaker of the House and the office of Speaker of the House is to make them the best legislators I can and give them the support that they need.

There's a perception out there that, now that you are speaker of the House, that you'll be able to shepherd Capital Outlay projects along and maybe move them up in the priority that would benefit Southwest Louisiana. Is that an unfair expectation?

I think it is somewhat unfair. As speaker of the House, I appointed every chairman, and I appointed every vice chairman. Out of the 25 members of the Appropriations Committee, I appointed 18 of them. Seven of them were elected from the congressional districts.

There may be some opportunity, but to think that Lake Charles or Southwest Louisiana is going to have parks on every corner, and a new golf course and sidewalks running through the city and five lanes, that's unrealistic expectations.

But there are some opportunities. One of my goals is to strengthen McNeese. McNeese is strong, but let's make McNeese stronger: What can we do to help Sowela? Mayor (Randy) Roach has called me a number of times about his Hurricane Museum. He wants to make sure I keep that on my front burner. He's called me about the Wildlife and Fisheries (building) on the lakefront.

There's a lot of issues, there's a lot of challenges, but I think it's a great opportunity for Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish and Southwest Louisiana. Over the next four years, I'm concerned about the state, but I'm from Lake Charles, and I'll always live here, so I'm going to do what I can to protect Lake Charles.

One issue that's not a bringing-home-the-bacon issue, but an issue that you might understand better than most is the issues facing the coast. What can you do there?

I've talked to folks, the chairman of Natural Resources, Gordy Dove, who is from the Houma-Thibodaux area. We have the CPRA (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority). One thing I told them a

number of times in the last couple of weeks is that I live in Calcasieu Parish and Cameron Parish. We want to make sure that we keep this area on the front burner.

I saw (Cameron Parish Administrator) Tina Horn's comments in the paper the other day about the levee projects and that it wasn't enough. I'm very familiar with that. Coming off the House Insurance Committee, one of the problems we have is finding homeowners insurance along the coast. And it's because of the deteriorating coast.

There may be a couple of things that slip through the cracks, but over the next four years, believe me, I'm going to be very, very passionate about coastal protection and coastal restoration in this area and do what I can to make sure that Calcasieu and Cameron are not left out.

Back to education. Talking with some of the local lawmakers, it seems like Southwest Louisiana, as far our education picture, is a little bit stronger than some other parts of the state. They were kind of wanting to make sure that our region doesn't get left behind or lost in the shuffle with education reform.

It's not just Calcasieu. You have some other parishes here that are really strong. I don't think Calcasieu or any of these other parishes have anything to worry about. We have good productive teachers.

There are going to be some changes. There are some opportunities for the superintendents to do more things with pay. There's still a lot of details to be worked out, but I think at the end of the day the governor is going to have a good package that's going to make Calcasieu better.

We are in the bottom five, the state of Louisiana is in the bottom five of all 50 states. And Calcasieu is in the top 10 (of parishes). But we're in the top 10 of the bottom five. So while that's good here in the state of Louisiana, how does that compare to the rest of the country? And I think that's our goal, our goal is to get Louisiana off the bottom five and move up that ladder.

There's going to be some things that are going to change, but it should benefit the teachers, and it should benefit the principals and the superintendents, and most of all, the kids.

What are we going to do about our infrastructure? We got a bad report the other day about our bridges and roads. Are we looking at that at all? Are we going to be able to anything about these deteriorating bridges and roads?

When we get more money, we can do anything you want.

Is there any hope that we'll find any money?

That's something that I had not been able to spend a lot of time on in the last couple of months, but that's obviously something that (state Department of Transportation and Development Secretary) Sherri LeBas will have a meeting (about). We'll discuss the I-10 bridge and the status of that. But, yeah, we're going to have to do something about that, and I'm not sure what that is.

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Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustee Council

Help Restore the Gulf Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
Draft Phase I Early Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment
PUBLIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Trustees want to hear from you! A draft plan of proposed early restoration projects is available for public review and comment. The **Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Draft Phase I Early Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment** describes eight projects, two in each of these states: Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The projects are intended to benefit injured marshes, coastal dune and nearshore habitats, oysters, and human usage of Gulf resources.

The trustees will conduct three public meetings in Louisiana where you can learn more about the draft restoration plan and provide your thoughts and suggestions.

LOUISIANA PUBLIC MEETINGS

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|---------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Jan. 31, 2012 | 5:30 – 6:30 PM 6:30 – 8:30 PM | Open House Meeting | Terrebonne Council Chambers 8026 Main Street, 2nd Floor, Houma, LA 70360 |
| Feb. 1, 2012 | 5:30 – 6:30 PM 6:30 – 8:30 PM | Open House Meeting | St. Bernard Parish Council Chambers 8201 W. Judge Perez Dr., Chalmette, LA 70043 |
| Feb. 2, 2012 | 5:30 – 6:30 PM 6:30 – 8:30 PM | Open House Meeting | Belle Chasse Auditorium 8398 Highway 23, Belle Chasse, LA 70037 |

To learn more about Early Restoration and to review and comment on the draft plan, visit www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov or www.LOSCO-DWH.com. For information by phone, please contact, Jenny Kurz, for the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana, 225.925.6606, or Nanciann Regalado, Department of the Interior, 678.296.6805.