

June 30, 2008

The Honorable Glenn Koepp  
Secretary of the Senate  
State Capitol  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Re: Senate Bill No. 672 by Senator Duplessis  
Legislative Pay Raise - Veto Message

Dear Mr. Koepp:

Since January, this Legislature has worked to accomplish unprecedented reforms for the people of Louisiana in two special sessions and one regular legislative session. Together, we have worked to transform the ethics code in our state, requiring disclosure at every level of government, prohibiting conflicts of interest, and moving Louisiana from the bottom of the list to the top in a national good government ranking.

We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in our state's ports and infrastructure and worked to cut or eliminate six taxes, including:

1. accelerating the elimination of the tax on business debt;
2. accelerating the elimination of the tax on business for machinery and equipment;
3. eliminating the burdensome tax on business utilities;
4. providing a tax deduction for tuition and student expense;
5. re-authorizing Louisiana's New Markets Tax Credits; and
6. completely eliminating the Stelly income tax increase on Louisiana taxpayers.

Together we have overhauled the workforce development system in our state, eliminating the Department of Labor and creating a Workforce Commission that puts Louisiana businesses and workers, not bureaucrats, in the driver's seat for workforce policy. We have also taken huge steps forward in reforming our mental health care system and providing more coverage for the uninsured. We raised teacher pay and expanded educational opportunities for our children.

Additionally, we have passed laws targeting those who prey on our children, increasing five-fold the penalties for sex offenders and doubling the sentence for the computer-aided solicitation of a minor.

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We also made an historic move by passing a budget that eliminates our state's long-held, unhealthy reliance on one-time revenue for recurring expenditures.

Our reforms have been bold, unprecedented and ambitious – and they have stretched to nearly every area of our state's government. To be clear, this is a record that we can all be proud of, and it has very much been a collaborative effort between the Legislature and my administration.

More than any piece of legislation, perhaps our greatest accomplishment has been the restoration of the public's trust in state government and in the belief that we can create a new Louisiana, which will grow and prosper.

That said, it is very clear that all of our great progress notwithstanding, the public is fast losing its confidence in state government because of the legislative pay raise bill. We can only effectively govern with the consent of the governed. If we do not have the support and confidence of the people, we might as well go home.

For that reason I have vetoed SB 672.

I had previously indicated that while I believe a raise more than doubling legislative pay to be excessive, I would not stop it, instead allowing the Legislature to direct its own affairs. I did not want to do anything that could slow down our reform movement or stop our march toward reform, growth, and progress in Louisiana. That decision was a mistake on my part. It is clear to me that this legislative pay raise is in itself a threat to our reform movement and our progress as a state.

By now you are aware of the reasons I have objected to this raise: a doubling of legislative pay is excessive, I oppose a system of future automatic pay increases without subsequent legislative action, and I believe putting any salary increase into effect in advance of the next election is bad policy. The voters, who are our collective bosses in this job, should be able to either ratify or reject a legislative pay raise at the ballot box in regular legislative elections before those funds are expended.

For these reasons, I have vetoed SB 672 and hereby return it to the Senate. It is my hope that we can now move on to other issues together and get back to doing the good work the people of Louisiana elected us to do.

Very truly yours,

Governor Bobby Jindal

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