



Baton Rouge Area Chamber®

David E. Roberts Center for Economic Development

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Baton Rouge Area Chamber 2023 Statewide Agenda and Election Platform Brief

Louisiana has become an outlier among its regional peers regarding population and job growth. Since the start of 2016, the state has lost over 90,000 residents and 3,000 jobs and is the only state that has lost both jobs and population since the beginning of 2016. To put the growth rates of our peers into perspective, had Louisiana just grown at the average rate of other southern states, we would have 239,000 more jobs and 301,000 additional residents.

Unfortunately, Louisiana's disappointing population and income growth rankings, alarming poverty and incarceration rates, transportation infrastructure woes, and educational and workforce challenges reflect a longstanding narrative of policy missteps.

The state and region's future hinges on making bold, transformative policy decisions on salient issues like education, economic development, fiscal policy, infrastructure, sustainability, and crime for Louisiana to shift from a narrative of despair to one where its residents genuinely thrive. As we look forward to another legislative election, BRAC is excited to introduce a comprehensive and future-focused platform. This platform is not just a set of policies; it is centered around fundamental principles and bold recommendations that address pressing challenges and seize growth opportunities.

In this election, BRAC urges candidates for legislative and gubernatorial races to adopt the following seven strategies and embrace these recommendations necessary to achieve them.

1) Turbocharge Louisiana's economic development efforts.

Recommendations:

- Redesign and reorganize LED into a more aggressive state economic development agency, fashioned on the best state economic development agencies, and competitive with the fastest growing states in the US. Support existing Louisiana companies while attracting business investments in industry sectors poised for more rapid growth that diversifies the state's economy.
- The State of Louisiana woefully underfunds project-ready sites as a part of its economic development sites prep program. Invest at least \$100 million into a sites program to develop certified sites across the state over the next four years.
- Position the deep-water ports of Louisiana for more competition for international trade.
- Increase support for entrepreneurs, innovation, and small business growth, through low regulation and paperwork, counseling and peer mentoring programs,



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incentives and grants into research and development, and access to growth capital.

- Expand state programs that drive minority business development and growth.
- Ensure Louisiana's talent programs, such as LED FastStart, are the best in the nation and expand their services to existing businesses in every region of Louisiana.
- Support carbon capture utilization and sequestration and ensure EPA Primacy over Class VI wells is properly and transparently established by the responsible state agencies.

2) Accelerate transportation infrastructure solutions.

Recommendations:

- Fund and complete all three phases of the I-10 widening project in East and West Baton Rouge Parishes.
- Fully fund the new Mississippi River Bridge and fund construction of the connecting corridors, LA 1 and LA 30.
- Complete the needed infrastructure upgrades and operational agreements to start the Baton Rouge to New Orleans passenger rail system, connecting through communities such as Ascension, Jefferson, and LaPlace along the corridor.
- Fund Louisiana's transportation construction and maintenance budgets at levels competitive with the top ten states in the US and ensure the Transportation Trust Fund has the required revenue to build and maintain our infrastructure.
- Support new toll financing as a user fee to generate revenue toward the public-private partnership (PPP) sources needed to accomplish projects like the new Mississippi River Bridge.

3) Prepare and propel learners into high-wage employment.

Recommendations:

- Expand workforce education programs, career exposure, and work-based learning in K-12 programs and create new high school work-based learning incentives for employers. The state's goal should be that every high school student not bound for a four-year college ends high school with work experience and/or dual enrollment credits/credentials toward a career.
- Fully fund universal early childhood education for three- and four-year-olds.
- Increase access to post-secondary credit and credentials for high school students and full transferability of college credits across Louisiana higher education programs.
- Update the state accountability system to properly account for student growth and career-oriented education in school performance scores.



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- Focus secondary and post-secondary curricula toward skills and competency needs of emerging industries and the economy.
- Reorganize the Louisiana Workforce Commission and local boards to focus on economic demands and align to target sectors in every region of Louisiana.
- Address state charter school policy to match student enrollment practices at traditional and magnet schools.
- Ensure inter-agency data sharing agreement between K-12, higher education, and workforce commission to improve student pathways from education to careers.

4) Improve the state's tax climate.

Recommendations:

- Eliminate the Franchise Tax.
- Centralize state sales tax collection.
- Reduce the corporate and personal income tax rates.
- Give local governments more control over property taxes, allowing the state to reduce its tax burden.

5) Enhance statewide public safety efforts.

Recommendations:

- Provide \$20 million in funding for the State Police DNA Lab to increase investigation capacity and shorten timelines to securing evidence.
- Ensure the implementation of ACT 374 of 2023, creating stronger accountability on the companies and devices employed to monitor defendants.
- Support vocational education and workforce re-entry programs for incarcerated Louisianians.
- Expand joint efforts between federal, state, and local criminal justice entities to address violent crime hotspots.

6) Improve the insurance environment.

Recommendations:

- Continually fund resiliency grants for property owners.
- Ensure building standards in south Louisiana are high enough for structures to withstand hurricanes.
- Create statutory trigger language for when insurers receive satisfactory proof of loss.
- Eliminate outlier fees or penalties on insurers in the state.
- Support federal efforts to address out-of-control Flood Insurance costs.



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- For auto insurance claims, allow insurers to pay medical costs directly to doctors and require reversionary trusts for future medical payments.
- Provide regular, independent analysis on why property and car insurance rates are high and recommendations to lower costs.

7) Promote cleanliness and beautification, and buoy resilience efforts.

Recommendations:

- Implement stricter maintenance and repair standards for interstates and prime corridors.
- Address litter along interstates and state highways, requiring grass cutters to pick up trash when mowing adjacent grass, contractors to clean shoulders following auto accidents, and expanding business “Adopt-A-Highway” programs.
- Enact more robust blight reduction policies.
- Support and expand incentives for historic redevelopment and blighted property reinvestment.
- Incorporate statewide complete streets policies and practices.
- Fund coastal protection and flood mitigation efforts to ensure communities can withstand 100-year storm events.



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