



# LOUISIANA SENATE

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## **STATE LEGISLATORS CONTINUE WORK OF THE 2016 REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

### **SENATE APPROVES MEASURES IN SUPPORT OF LOCAL AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

District 34 State Senator Francis Thompson (D-Delhi) and his colleagues in the legislature are persistent in their work as the 2016 Regular Legislative Session nears its halfway point. So far, legislators have discussed bills on a wide variety of topics including everything from education and health care access to public safety and business and industry issues. Included in the list of measures that are moving through the legislative process is a measure that impacts local farmers and schools and another that supports local architects and engineers, both authored by Sen. Thompson.

Senate Bill 420 requires BESE, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, to develop and implement a farm to school program in Louisiana. The program will be designed to assist schools and school food service personnel in identifying and utilizing all available resources to support and increase the use of locally grown or raised agricultural products in school nutrition programs.

"Bringing Louisiana fruits and vegetables to cafeteria trays across the state would bring a multitude of advantages for all of the parties involved," said Senator Thompson. "A farm to school program not only supports our local agricultural industry but also encourages healthy eating for students."

"27 states have enacted some form of legislation regarding farm to school program and seeing as agriculture is the number one industry in our state, it is critical that Louisiana establish its own program," Sen. Thompson added.

The second measure, Senate Bill 419, requires professional services selection boards, which select architects and engineers to work on state projects, to consider the geographical proximity of the physical location of the office of an applicant to the physical location of the job or project when determining which applicant is best for each project.

"I brought this bill to remedy an inequity I have noticed in state contracts for professional services. From architect to engineer selection, I have noticed that the selection boards do not always take into account the locality of the professionals bidding on a job," said Sen. Thompson. "Coming from a rural area, I know the value of hiring a local professional, who is familiar with the project area."

The measure does not require selection boards to choose an applicant based only on their location, it simply requires them to consider locality as part of their list of guidelines when making their final decision. Other factors already being considered include training, experience, workload, past performance, etc.

SB 420 was passed by the full senate and now moves to the House for approval. SB 419 has received approval from the Senate Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works and now moves to the Senate floor for consideration.

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