

SENATOR'S NEWS RELEASE

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STATE SENATE BEGINS WORK OF 2010 REGULAR SESSION

SENATORS CHABERT & CARTER PETERSON OFFICIALLY SEATED AS NEW MEMBERS

Members of the Louisiana State Senate began the work of the 2010 Regular Session of the State Legislature at noon Monday, March 29th. During this regular session, lawmakers may discuss measures relating to just about any subject matter except specific tax matters. However, with the state facing a state budget shortfall of at least \$1 billion in the coming fiscal year and the budget gap growing to nearly \$2 billion the following year, state fiscal issues and policy issues related to those fiscal decisions are expected to dominate the 2010 Regular Session debate.

"We have a constitutional responsibility and a responsibility to the citizens of Louisiana to make sure we are targeting their hard-earned tax dollars to key programs and services that are important to our state's immediate and long-term growth," Senate President Joel Chaisson (D-Destrehan) said. "We are experiencing a systemic reduction in the growth of state revenue collections that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future and as we rethink the operations of state government we must make sure that we do not step backward in the progress we have made in education and economic development. Now more than ever we need to bring all ideas to the table for a reasoned, responsible discussion about Louisiana's new path."



As part of the budget discussion, legislators will consider a series of proposals to give the legislature and the governor more flexibility to deal with a fiscal crisis. Under current law and the State Constitution, options to reduce funding for certain state services and programs are limited, with higher education and health care bearing the brunt of budget cuts. And, while the state has a sizeable rainy day fund to assist with a state financial crisis, the fund can only be used when there is a drop in state revenue collections, even though one-half of the state budget relies on federal

funding.

"We need to make sure that we have all the tools in our tool box as we tackle the fiscal issues and related matters this session." Senate President Pro-Tempore Sharon Weston Broome said. "In some instances, there will be no good choices so having all available information is crucial to make sure the choices we make are the right ones. Vital services for our families, our children and our disabled and elderly citizens are at stake."

As part of the first day of business, newly elected State Senators Norby Chabert (D-Houma) and Karen Carter Peterson (D-New Orleans) officially took their seats. Senator Chabert, whose father Leonard and brother Marty previously served in the Senate, takes the District 20 seat which includes southern Terrebonne and LaFourche Parishes and most of Houma. Senator Carter Peterson, who previously served as Speaker Pro Tempore of the House of Representatives, is representing District 5 which stretches along the Mississippi River from Canal to Jefferson Avenue and includes the Central Business District, the Warehouse District, the Garden District, Central City and parts of Uptown, Mid City and Carrollton areas.



Before the opening of the regular session, state senators pre-filed 677 bills. Citizens can read and print the bills and other legislative measures as well check on committee schedules and agendas via the Internet at <http://senate.legis.state.la.us> or www.legis.state.la.us . The public can also monitor Senate proceedings live on the Internet on the Senate Web site or the joint legislative site, www.legis.state.la.us . Live broadcasts of legislative proceedings can be seen weekday afternoons on certain local cable stations participating in LaTV, a cooperative effort of the House, the Senate, Louisiana Public Broadcasting and the Louisiana Cable Television Association.

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