

Opinions

theadvertiser.com

Inspirational thought

Charge them with crime upon crime; do not let them share in your salvation.
(Psalm 69:26-28)

Sunday, March 20, 2011

Merger of universities is political

No one can argue that the diversity of New Orleans and the University of New Orleans and Southern University don't have graduation rates. But one has to wonder whether simply combining two weak sisters would be either one strong.

A national consultant told the Regents that the first thing needed to understand is that merging schools in hopes of proving them is not going to save money and if it is to be done it, it could cost more.

The study offered two options that had five parts in common:

- Make UNO the University of Greater New Orleans with an entrance requirement of at least 20 on the ACT;
- Make SUNO the Metropolitan University with a minimum 20 ACT requirement;
- Establish a center to be a ringhouse that conducts test-

Mike Haston
mhaston@gannett.com



ing to determine who qualifies for what school and precisely what a student needs to meet those requirements;

■ Keep Delgado Community College as the place for students to pick up those skills; and

■ Move the universities out of the LSU and SU governance systems.

Two problems with the entry requirements became obvious.

Few students currently enrolled at either campus could have met the higher ACT requirements, and there are standing loopholes in the requirement

for a higher ACT that exists at all universities. A high school student's ranking in the graduating class can bypass the ACT and schools are allowed to make other exceptions.

The two really political options in the plan were to create a new management system strictly for the new schools or put the universities under the University of Louisiana System.

The consultant made no suggestion to the Board of Regents as to which option he preferred.

When asked privately, he said, "In an ideal world, I'd prefer the first, but this is not an ideal world."

Jones realized the politics that would be involved in establishing a new management system, especially with Jindal saying he wants to abolish the current management boards and the

Regents and to create a new single board of higher education.

The Louisiana Community and Technical College System would operate separately.

So the Regents, with a split vote, chose Door No. 2.

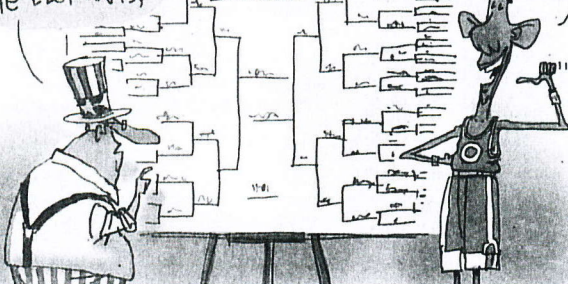
Now the issue goes to the Legislature, where politics really decide the issue.

A two-thirds vote in the House and the Senate is needed to accomplish the study's goal.

The Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus has vowed to fight it but its numbers are not enough to block the move. Caucus members are seeking the help of fellow Democrats — several of whom have been burned by Jindal killing their construction funding for back-home projects — and the assistance of LSU supporters who aren't happy about losing UNO.

-THE TSUNAMI OVER JAPAN,
GADDAFI OVER HIS OWN PEOPLE,
GOVERNMENT UNIONS OVER TAXPAYERS,
BIG BIRD OVER THE ELEPHANTS,

PRESIDENTIAL BRACKET



© Mike Scott
PoliticalCartoon.com

Louisiana budget: A spending peg in a revenue hole?

"266" Eddie Ashworth had the number ready when I fumbled to recall how close the Ron Gomez-Kenny Bowen mayoral runoff was in 1992. Ashworth's sister, Lafayette Parish Council member Kathy Ashworth, was one of the three leading candidates but didn't make the runoff that Bowen won by 266 votes. This last Lafayette mayor's race before consolidation was a doozy.

But that wasn't the number that Ashworth came to our office to discuss. He's with Better Choices for a Better Louisiana, an organization of environmental, business, labor and other groups "that want to invest in Louisiana's future." Ashworth is also director of the Louisiana Budget Project.

His point: Gov. Bobby Jindal and his supporters treat the current state budget crisis as a matter of excessive spending.

"We do not have a spending problem," Ashworth said. "We have a revenue problem."

The national recession drove tax revenues down, he said. But so did the repeal of the Stelly plan income tax hikes. The higher taxes would have raised enough to offset about \$500 million of the current \$1.6 billion shortfall, he said. Ashworth said tax exemptions consume \$7 billion of the \$14 billion that could be raised by the tax code.

These include credits like the movie production credit, which Ashworth said has created no serious film infrastructure in Louisiana, and the two-year tax exemption that applies to horizontal drilling at many of the lucrative wells now working in the Haynesville Shale area.

"We're trying to pound a spending peg into a revenue hole," Ashworth said, "and it's tremendously detrimental to higher education and other things."

Bill Decker will be out of the office until March 21. Leave a message at 337-289-6327 or bdecker@theadvertiser.com.



Bill Decker

What you think

From the forums: Fix auto insurance in Louisiana

The problem in Louisiana is the frivolous lawsuits that are in, and the fact that insurance companies encourage these suits by paying people because it cheaper than going through a lawsuit.

4sonmom can help stop this behavior by doing one simple thing, when we have an accident, stop giving your name and number to the police so that there will be a witness to the accident. Then you can't twist facts to force the insurance companies to pay. We learned this the hard way, and have already witnessed an accident, and after giving our number to the police, sure enough the people

who were in the wrong were going to sue. Just our testimony stopped the lawsuit. Take the time to give your number, it will save all of us money on our insurance.

4sonmom This is not hard to fix if there is political will to do it. First make certain everyone who is driving on the roads has insurance. Make it a requirement that a lapse or cancellation in insurance is reported to the police in that zip code and a notice is sent to the address on record for a mandatory proof of insurance to be sent to the police station. If it is not then a police officer is sent to the home and license plate

is removed from the car. This is a political problem not a technical or logistical problem.

crawman I believe that one reason our auto insurance rates are so high is because we have to add "uninsured motorist" coverage to our premium. This is ridiculous! Uninsured motorist coverage should not even exist. There are so many ways around maintaining auto insurance, and the driver only gets caught if stopped for some other reason. I would like to see some sort of law enacted which stipulates that if an uninsured motorist is involved in an

accident, then they automatically forfeit ALL rights to sue as a result of that accident, regardless of the circumstances.

ProudCajun I think the insurance companies notify the state when coverage lapses. I also think there are license plate scanners that read license plates of cars on the street. Equip police with the latter and a system that flags lapsed insurance or other vehicles that need the attempt at law enforcement, stop and, in the case of insurance, immobilize and confiscate the car on the spot if no proof of insurance is on board.

ProudCajun

brerabbit