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## Coalition Pushes Taxes To Plug Louisiana Budget Gap

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**BATON ROUGE** -- A coalition of nonprofit organizations, unions and advocacy groups is pushing Louisiana lawmakers to pass \$940 million in tax hikes to help close next year's budget gap, an agenda that faces strong opposition from the governor and Republicans.

The group, calling itself Better Choices for A Better Louisiana, wants lawmakers to increase so-called "sin taxes" on cigarettes, gambling and alcohol, while also reversing income tax cuts passed in 2007 and 2008.

Most of the proposals would require a two-thirds vote in the legislative session that begins next week.

Gov. Bobby Jindal, House leaders and Republican leaders oppose any attempts to raise taxes.

Both the governor and members of the Legislature are up for re-election this fall.

Eddie Ashworth, with the Better Choices organization, said officials need to look at boosting state revenue rather than a third year of deep budget cuts. Much of those cuts have fallen on health care and education, the big areas of state spending.

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