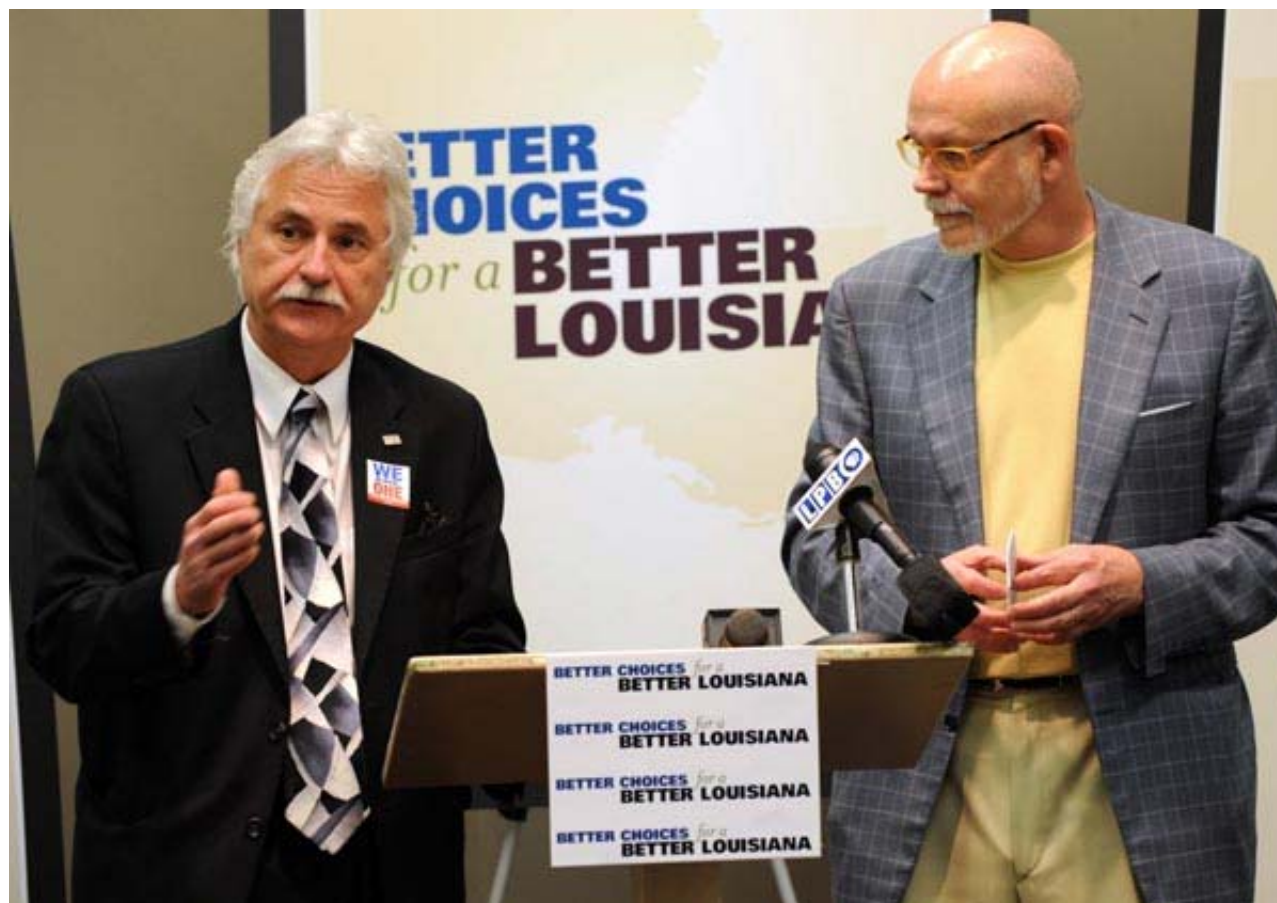


## Coalition pushes tax increases



[Show Caption](#) Arthur D. Lauck/The Advocate

### Resources

- [BR Homicides Maps](#)

Maps listing homicides or suspected homicides in EBR Parish for 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008 and 2007.

- [Gas Prices in BR](#)

Current gas prices in BR area.

- [Governmental Links](#)

Important local, statewide offices.

## Blogs

-  [LSU Football](#)
-  [Louisiana Politics](#)
-  [LSU Baseball](#)
-  [Behind the Party Scene](#)
-  [Advocate Photography](#)
-  [Southern Sports](#)
-  [Saints Football](#)

## Newsletters

- [Breaking News Alerts](#)
- [Breaking Sports Alerts](#)
- [The Advocate's Daily Digest](#)
  
- By [WILL SENTELL](#)
- Advocate Capitol News Bureau
- Published: Apr 19, 2011 - Page: 6A

## [Comments \(20\)](#)

Conceding the plan faces huge obstacles, a coalition of education, labor and nonprofit groups Monday called for a \$940 million tax increase to help ease Louisiana's state budget problems.

"The problem is not spending, it is revenue," said Eddie Ashworth, director of the Louisiana Budget Project.

The coalition calls itself an advocate for low- and middle-income citizens on state and federal money issues.

However, Ashworth and other coalition members acknowledged their proposed tax hikes face massive hurdles in the Louisiana Legislature.

"I think we are definitely pushing a rock up a hill," he said.

The proposed increases would apply to state income, cigarette and gambling taxes.

The session begins Monday amid predictions of a \$1.6 billion shortfall.

Gov. Bobby Jindal has repeatedly said he would veto any tax increase.

In addition, any tax boost would require the support of two-thirds of the House and Senate in an election year. If passed and vetoed by Jindal, backers would have to round up two-thirds majorities again for the increases to take effect.

The coalition, which is called Better Choices for a Better Louisiana, wants to:

n Suspend indefinitely a state income tax cut of about \$500 million per year, called the Stelly plan, most of which

lawmakers approved overwhelmingly in 2008.

n Increase Louisiana's cigarette tax by \$1 per pack, up from 36 cents now. Backers said the increase would raise \$301 million per year.

n Increase the riverboat franchise fee and the tax rate on video poker machines to raise about \$100 million.

n Increase alcohol taxes by \$38.5 million per year, including a \$2.50 per barrel increase in the beer tax.

Steve Monaghan, president of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, conceded that backers do not have the 70 votes needed to pass any tax hikes in the House.

"But that doesn't mean you don't work to get the 70 votes," he said.

No possible legislative sponsors were identified for the Stelly tax cut suspension.

Monaghan and others said Jindal has relied too heavily on state spending cuts to ease budget troubles, including reductions for colleges and universities and health care.

"The governor has been on a three-year jihad against government spending," Ashworth said.

Monaghan said the coalition's plan is a bid to "start the conversation and let people know there are much better choices than this," a reference to repeated spending reductions.

Organizers say the coalition includes 39 members, including Monaghan's and Ashworth's groups, the Greater Baton Rouge AFL-CIO, Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations, Louisiana NAACP and the AARP.

However, the AARP — which claims about 500,000 members statewide — declined to endorse calls for a suspension of the Stelly tax repeal.

A survey of 403 members showed the coalition's Stelly tax plan failed to generate enough support, said Denise Bottcher, a spokeswoman for the group.

The 2008 Stelly bill restored state income tax levels to where they were before voters in 2002 approved a constitutional amendment.

That amendment repealed the state sales tax on groceries and utilities and boosted income taxes for some middle- and upper-income earners.

The coalition also called for a moratorium on any new state tax exemptions, which leaders said already total \$7.1 billion per year.

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.theadvocate.com/news/latest/Coalition-pushes-tax-increases.html?showAll=y&c=y>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright © 1992-2008, 2theadvocate.com, WBRZ, Louisiana Broadcasting LLC and The Advocate, Capital City Press LLC, All Rights Reserved.