



Louisiana Economic Development Update

October 27, 2008

Gov. Jindal Applauds Better Government Association Ethics Ranking of Louisiana as #5 in Nation and Improving

Today, the Better Government Association (BGA) released its second edition of the BGA-Alper Integrity Index, announcing that Louisiana's overall ranking improved from 46th in 2002 to 5th in the country, and will be No. 1 in the nation, once the state's entire ethics reforms are included in their ranking process.

In BGA's announcement today, BGA Executive Director Jay Stewart said, "To score each state's conflict of interest laws, the BGA relied on the Center for Public Integrity's (CPI) ranking of state conflict of interest laws. That ranking has not been updated since 2006. Accordingly, Louisiana's recent sweeping changes to its conflict of interest laws are not reflected in this edition of the Index. If Louisiana's recent changes were scored, its overall ranking would rise to No. 1, and No. 1 in conflict of interest laws."

The new CPI assessment for Louisiana was not included in BGA's ranking because CPI has not yet published its revised conflict-of-interest rankings for all 50 states. CPI did a special ranking update for Louisiana, following Gov. Jindal's special session in February, which was dedicated to overhauling ethics laws in the state.

Gov. Bobby Jindal said, "BGA's announcement today is another terrific signal that our special session to overhaul ethics laws in our state has indeed sent a clear message to the country that 'who you know' is no longer more important than 'what you know' when it comes to doing business in Louisiana. We are especially pleased that Louisiana's overall BGA ranking would in fact be No. 1 in the country, and our conflict of interest laws would be No. 1 also when BGA accounts for updated CPI rankings and the totality of the sweeping ethics reforms we put into law earlier this year."

Roughly four years ago, Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab conducted a national survey of business executives located outside Louisiana to better understand their criteria for selecting sites for new business investment. Nearly 60 percent of these business leaders considered "perceptions of government corruption and unethical practices" to be an important factor in site selection. When asked what Louisiana could do to attract new business, these business leaders most frequently suggested cleaning up the state's image concerning ethics.

"This new ranking will help establish a new, more positive image for our state, and undoubtedly will help us attract more new jobs and investment to Louisiana in the future," said Louisiana Economic Development Secretary Stephen Moret. "Gov. Jindal and the Legislature successfully worked together to help eliminate one of the top obstacles to economic development and growth in our state."

BGA also announced today that Louisiana now ranks third in the nation on open records laws, second in whistleblower laws and fourth in open meetings laws. CPI, which provides the conflict-of-interest rankings utilized in the BGA ranking, recently indicated that Louisiana's new conflict of interest laws are the best in the country. The second edition of the BGA-Alper Integrity Index relies on data compiled through 2007 and early 2008.