

STATE REPRESENTATIVE AIMEE ADATTO FREEMAN, District 98

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STATE OF LOUISIANA
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Monique Blossom
Legislative Aide

Dear Friends,

Let me begin by thanking you for the honor of serving you in the Louisiana Legislature. I am proud to represent District 98 and the City of New Orleans.

The 2020 Legislative sessions (Regular and Extraordinary) were an unexpected adventure with COVID-19. It is difficult, and – just like you – I find it hard to make such big changes so quickly. Wearing masks, keeping a social distance, worrying about our children and our families: we are living in challenging times – but we can get through this together.

I want to share how state government (with much Federal funding) is helping us, and how you can take advantage of some new programs and new laws. So, here is my report:

EDUCATION

Information on our schools is changing quickly. To see the latest plans, go online to nolapublicschools.com or call 504-304-3520. Whatever the plans are, there is some new money available statewide:

Governor John Bel Edwards has released \$50 Million in CARES Act funding (Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund) for education: \$35 million for K-12 devices and internet connectivity, and social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, \$15 Million for workforce development at community and technical colleges, internet devices for postsecondary students, student and faculty training for hybrid learning, and an online portal for dual enrollment •

HERE ARE TWO GRANT PROGRAMS YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR

\$300 Million in COVID-19 relief funds are available for Louisiana Small Businesses (under 50 employees, 50% owned by Louisiana resident, filed Louisiana tax returns, first grants to those who did not get an insurance payment, Economic Injury Disaster Loan or Payroll Protection Program loan) \$40 Million in the program will go to businesses owned by women, minorities and veterans • details at www.treasury.la.gov/Main-Street •

\$250 payment to Frontline Workers (health care related, first responders, grocery, mortuary, veterinary workers, income under \$50,000/year) • details at frontlineworkers.La.gov •

COVID-19 FOOD PROGRAM FOR NEW ORLEANS RESIDENTS

Two meals a day cooked by local restaurants are available for those not in any federal food program, over 65 or children under 18, plus those with Covid-19 or in poor health. Sign up at 504-658-2299, or nola.gov/311 •

COVID-19 LEGISLATIVE ACTION

TOPS eligibility was modified as to testing deadlines, academic progress and home study requirements • Health Insurance was required to cover testing, with payment of patient cost-share delayed until 2023 • Some legal deadlines were suspended from March 17, 2020 through July 5, 2020 • Interruption and extension of bail enforcement time periods were provided •

Businesses and public entities in performance of business operations, event organizers, personal and protective equipment makers and providers, restaurants, K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions are all protected from liability due to COVID-19 (with this immunity not to apply to gross negligence or intentional misconduct) •

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COVID-19 FUNDING

The Main Street Recovery Program supplied \$275 Million for businesses • The Corona Virus Local Recovery Program supplied \$530 Million for local governments and medical expenses • Cares Act Funding included Emergency Food Assistance Program, \$14 Million • Coronavirus Relief Fund \$1.8 Billion • Higher Education \$186.8 Million • Office of Public Health \$159.9 Million • Department of Education \$302.2 Million • Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund \$50.3 Million •

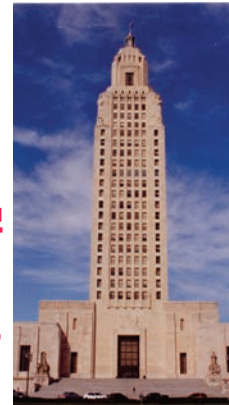
STATE BUDGET

The General Appropriations Bill contains \$34 Billion for operating expenses of the Executive Branch • This includes \$16.6 Billion in federal funds • \$8.5 Billion in state general funds • \$4 Billion in statutory dedications • \$1.6 billion in fees and self-generating revenues • \$1.6 Billion in interagency transfers • Total appropriations of \$39.4 Billion includes operating funds for the judiciary and legislature, monetary judgments and ancillary funding • A \$3.8 Billion increase over last year came largely from COVID-19 expenses • \$90 Million from the Rainy Day (Budget Stabilization) Fund, along with federal recovery funds, agency budget reductions, and moving Medicaid savings into next year took care of the Budget Shortfall •



Aimee Adatto Freeman
Representative
District 98

☆ **DISTRICT 98** ☆
**NEWS YOU WILL
WANT TO KNOW!**



**LEGISLATIVE 2020 UPDATE
COVID-19**
Representative Aimee Adatto Freeman
8600 Oak Street
New Orleans, LA 70118-1222

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APPROPRIATIONS

General Government, \$5.1 Billion • Pre-K–12 Education and Special Schools, \$5 Billion • Higher Education, \$2.8 Billion • Health Care, \$17.7 Billion • Capital Outlay, \$2.1 Billion • Public Safety, \$1.2 Billion • Children & Family Services, \$755 Million • Judicial, \$176 Million • Legislative, \$101 Million • Ancillary Expenses, \$2.3 Billion • Other Requirements, \$1.1 Billion • Non-Appropriated Requirements, \$592 Million •

CRIMINAL JUSTICE CHANGES

Incarcerated pregnant women and new mothers will no longer be put into solitary confinement, except under certain specified circumstances • The Children’s Cabinet will be retained and a Children of Incarcerated Parents Council will now include affected parties, government agencies and advocates • Those convicted of a crime committed when under 18 and resulting in a 25 year sentence will be eligible to seek parole with certain conditions met • Juvenile court costs and fees can be waived at the judge’s discretion • A Clean Slate Task Force has been set up to develop ways to quickly clear criminal records • Ten consecutive years of employment is no longer a requirement for expungement of some crimes • Expungement fees can be paid by U.S. Postal Money Order or a lawyer’s check • Adulterating food is a crime • Vagrancy is no longer a crime • Former inmates will get a card listing all vocational licensing and certification programs completed • Probation and parole officers are required to accommodate parolee’s work duties when scheduling reporting, and meet via cell phone • A parolee can be put on inactive status after 3 or 7 years without violation •

POLICE TRAINING, SCREENING & DE-ESCALATION TASK FORCE

This task force will make recommendations for legislation regarding: • Racial bias recognition • Misconduct penalties, and the duty to report misconduct • Use of force • Identifying and eliminating bad actors • Any other recommendations deemed necessary to restore the public’s trust that the law enforcement community is serving and protecting all the citizens of Louisiana in a fair and unbiased manner •

THE COURTS AND LAWYERS

Standards will be set for notarizing documents online • “Dustin Gary Act” approves “Supported Decision-making Agreements” tailored individually for adults with disabilities • The age limit has been eliminated for all justices of the peace and constables • Daily compensation raised to \$50 for jurors in civil cases • Ads for legal services referencing a settlement or jury award must also state attorney fees in the case • The Louisiana State Supreme Court and the Louisiana State Bar Association have been asked to implement a lawyer advertisement review recognition program •

CIVIL JUSTICE REFORM ACT OF 2020

\$10,000 threshold set for jury trials, \$5,000 deposit required for tort cases valued between \$10,000 and \$50,000 • Insurer identity and insurance coverage existence generally not admissible • Jury may see only billed medical expenses • Generally, medical expenses paid, plus plaintiff’s cost sharing, plus 40% of the difference between amounts billed and paid • Failure to wear a seat belt may be considered •

STATE TAX CHANGES

Political subdivisions may set a local sales tax exemption for feminine hygiene products and diapers • All penalties and interest on late-filed tax returns in 2019 and 2020 will be waived for taxpayers with a COVID-19 health impact • Small businesses may suspend the first \$300,000 of taxable capital when calculating their corporate franchise tax for July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 • \$5 Million of promotional pay wagers may be exempted from the total net gaming proceeds of casino operators • Angel Investor program extended through 2025, maximum annual awarded amount now \$7.2 Million, enhanced credit for low-income areas • New Market Jobs program, years carried forward decreased from ten to five, low-income community investment capped at \$5 Million, \$75 Million additional investment authority added • Rehabilitation of Historic Structures date extended for eligible expenses to qualify for tax credit, effectiveness of credit extended, yearly program cap set at \$125 Million • Enterprise Zone Program extended to 2026 and temporarily to retailers, hotels and restaurants with less than 50 employees nationwide • Quality Jobs Program expanded to include COVID-19 impacted businesses including retailers, hotels and restaurants with less than 50 employees nationwide •

NEWS YOU NEED TO KNOW

When federal law allows states to do so, Daylight Saving Time will be the year-round standard time in Louisiana • Acupuncture must be covered by medical insurance • After breast removal cancer surgery, if other breast must be removed, medical insurance must cover • The Louisiana Department of Hospitals is conducting a study compiling information on projected future demand and state expenditures for state-provided long-term support and services for the elderly and persons with adult-onset disabilities. • Certain occupational licensing boards may waive license and examination fees for low-income applicants, and offer fee payment plans • The sale of blue glow emergency lights is prohibited to any person • LSU national championship license plates are now available • The Gaming Control Board and State Police will set up regulatory framework for fantasy sports contests • Parishes will vote November 3, 2020 to determine whether fantasy sports wagering is permitted there: 8% state tax on the net revenue of fantasy sports contests will go into the Early Childhood Education Fund • Retired teachers may return to work and stay in the teachers’ retirement system under two plans • A license can be issued to retired dental hygienists to work as volunteers •

THE CENSUS

If we want our fair share of Federal Government money, we all need to STAND UP AND BE COUNTED! You can fill out your Census form online (My2020Census.GOV) or on the phone (844-330-2020). Get your family and friends to sign up. **Each Louisiana resident means \$3,200 in Federal Funds to us!**

NEWS FOR VETERANS AND THE MILITARY

Deployment cannot be used in the risk classification category of auto or homeowners’ insurance policies, but can be considered for premium discounts • Out of state deployment allows drivers to cancel auto insurance without surrendering a license plate, and no penalty can be charged by the insurer for a lapse in coverage • Certain veterans honorably discharged from Louisiana military bases may be eligible for TOPS-Tech benefits • Reciprocal state occupational licenses may be available for military and dependents assigned to duty in Louisiana • Any Purple Heart recipient can get hunting and fishing licenses at the resident rate • Disabled veterans can have a parking fee exemption at Port of New Orleans cruise terminals •

CANNABIS AND MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Any state-licensed physician may recommend medical marijuana for any condition that the physician considers debilitating to a patient and the physician does not need a special permit to do so • Physicians and state facilities involved with therapeutic marijuana are exempt from criminal prosecution as are state-chartered financial institutions providing financial services to them • Industrial hemp and cannabidiol derived from it (CBD) are regulated •

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help you – Monique Blossom is my legislative aide and you can reach her at (504) 861-1614, or visit my office at 8600 Oak Street. I am at your service, and I am always glad to hear from you!

Aimee A. Freeman

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CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ON THE BALLOT NOVEMBER 3, 2020

- HB 267** – This allows the Rainy Day Fund (the Budget Stabilization Fund) to be used for expenses due to a federally declared disaster.
- HB 360** – This allows the presence of oil or gas to be included when setting the fair market value of an oil or gas well for ad valorem taxes.
- HB 425** – This declares that no provision of the state constitution protects a right to abortion or requires the funding of abortion.
- HB 464** – This requires the Legislature to establish a procedure to determine the expenditure limit, keeping growth below 5% in a single year.
- HB 525** – This increases the income threshold for purposes of qualifying for the special homestead exemption assessment level.
- SB 12 (ES)** – This creates the Unclaimed Property Permanent Trust Fund and dedicates unclaimed property funds.
- SB 272** – This establishes an ad valorem tax exemption for property subject to a cooperative endeavor agreement requiring the property owner to make payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT).

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ON THE BALLOT November 3, 2020