

# News Clips Report

## College autonomy encouraged \*\*\* Businessmen back tuition legislation Advocate, The

**02/14/2011**

The Louisiana Legislature should approve bills that would give universities greater freedom to increase tuition, a group of businessmen and lawyers who have supported Gov. Bobby Jindal said Monday.

The members of Blueprint Louisiana told the Press Club of Baton Rouge that the increased autonomy for the states public universities could raise up to \$300 million in revenue for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

Blueprint Louisiana was formed in 2006 and counts some of the states most influential businessmen on its board of trustees.

The group released 14 of its policy recommendations for the upcoming legislative session, which its members say could provide between \$972 million to \$1.64 billion in potential savings and new revenues.

We will follow and track bills and we will probably show up in force, said Bill Fenstermaker, the groups chairman.

Fenstermaker is chief executive officer of a Lafayette-based engineering and environmental consulting company called C.H. Fenstermaker & Associates Inc.

He and his company have donated \$15,000 to Jindals gubernatorial race, according to the governors campaign finance reports, not including the one for 2010, which is due Tuesday.

State government expects to collect about \$1.6 billion less revenue in fiscal year 2012 than was collected and spent for the 2011 fiscal year, which ends June 30. Jindal repeatedly says that he will oppose any efforts to raise taxes, meaning that legislators will have to find other ways to approve a budget that balances spending with less revenues.

One way to save money, said Blueprint Secretary **Jimmy Maurin**, of Covington, would be for the state to revise sentencing and parole guidelines in order to release more nonviolent drug offenders as well as pursuing early medical parole.

The state spends almost \$670 million to keep nearly 40,000 adults in prison.

For the states colleges and universities, Blueprint Louisiana recommends that the Board of Regents, which oversees policy for the states higher education institutions, should act boldly to eliminate many of the 450 low-completer and duplicative academic programs.

Blueprint Louisiana co-founder Clay Allen said the organization also supports linking structural changes to the ability of colleges and universities to raise their tuition. The plan would include performance-based funding formula that would graduate more students and better meet work-force demands.

TOPS, better known by its acronym for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students, covers most tuition costs for about 40,000 qualified students, Blueprint Louisiana quoted the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Aid.

Allen said he realizes that increases in tuition will primarily be paid by taxpayers through the TOPS scholarship.

Allen said after the meeting that he hoped legislators would re-evaluate the structure of TOPS. But, he said, public

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universities should be allowed the flexibility to raise tuition regardless of its impact on TOPS.

Allen is the managing partner at the Lafayette law firm of Allen and Gooch. He donated \$10,000 to Jindals gubernatorial campaigns, according to the governors campaign finance reports, not including the one for 2010, which is due Tuesday.

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