

'It's Your Money...'

Landrieu wants state's fair share of stimulus

By SYLVIA SCHON
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Louisiana is not immune to outside economic forces, but much is being done to help the state's future, Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu told members of the Hammond and Amite chambers of commerce Thursday.

"Prepare yourselves for what may come," Landrieu said, adding that if it doesn't come, all the better.

Landrieu spoke to Amite chamber members during an early afternoon meeting at Mike's Catfish Inn and then shared comments with Hammond chamber members at a later chamber social hosted by ERA Stirling Properties.

The state is facing a \$2 billion budget shortfall, but Landrieu said he remains optimistic.

"We will make it through these tough times better than when we came in," he said.

Louisiana has never lined up completely with whomever is in the White House and has also never lined up completely with whatever is going in the nation's economy, he said.

Political ideologies aside, Louisiana needs to get its fair share of federal stimulus money because, "It's your money ... We send it to them," Landrieu said.

Federal government has collected billions of dollars on oil severance for years while sharing 5 cents on a dollar with Louisiana. Other states get closer to 50 cents on a dollar he said.

Despite the economy, tourism is up in Louisiana, he said.

He and his staff work with parish tourist commissions to tie Louisiana destinations together and encourage visitors to stay longer and see more.

Movie-making, which also falls to his office, is also up. Walt Disney is slated to film in the French Quarter before long using local talent and music, he said.

Proposed cuts to the state's tourism budget is "penny wise and pound foolish," according to Landrieu, because tourism brings dollars into the state.

Betty Stewart, head of the Tangipahoa Parish Visitors and Convention Bureau, noted that with the state's help, the office can do far more to promote the parish and what it has to offer.

Landrieu said he travels nationally and internationally to promote Louisiana and "capture" what he can for the state. He also visits Washington, D.C., and that has

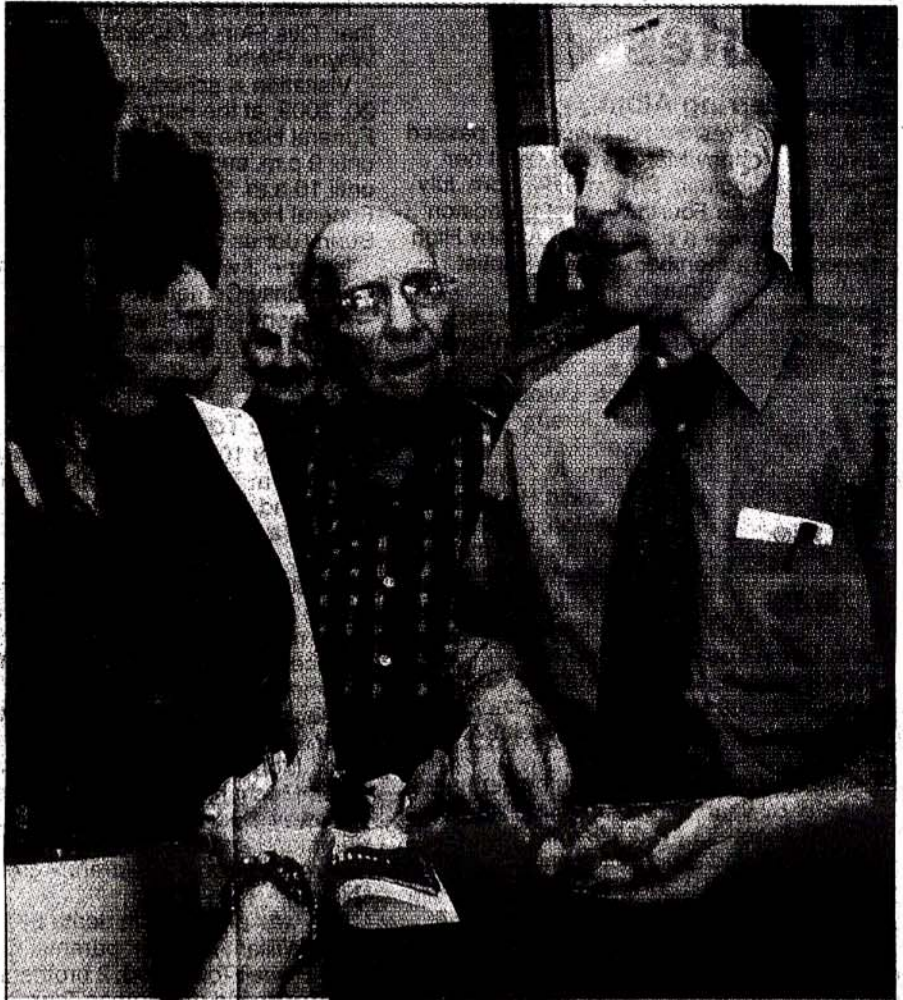


Photo by Sylvia Schon



Photo courtesy of Hammond Chamber of Commerce

STATE'S NO. 2 VISITS TANGIPAHOA

— Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu chats with Amite Chamber of Commerce members Thursday after giving them an overview of current economic issues facing the state. At right, Landrieu stands with Hammond Chamber of Commerce Director Charlotte Lenoir at the After Hours social at ERA Stirling Properties Thursday. Behind them is Parish Clerk of Court Julian Dufreche.

drawn some attention to the state's needs. President Obama's Secretary of Homeland Security visited Louisiana this week. The Secretary of Education will arrive Friday and the secretaries for the

Department of the Interior and Housing and Urban Development have visited recently as well, Landrieu said.

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