



## Mandeville's Mayer on ethics reform advisory group

By Matthew Penix

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### **Group will recommend options of reform to Jindal**

Martin "Marty" Mayer just added another notch to his resume.

The Mandeville resident is already considered a philanthropist, community leader and real estate mogul, directing 350 employees in 20 offices as the president and CEO of Stirling Properties LLC., headquartered in Covington.



Martin Mayer

Now Mayer will help mold Gov.-elect Bobby Jindal's 31-point ethics reform package aimed at turning around a state marred in public corruption. He was recently selected as one of 50 representatives statewide to Jindal's Ethics Transition Advisory Council. He's the only representative from St. Tammany Parish.

"It's a great time for us to send a message to the rest of the country, whether is real or perceived, that we are serious about ethics reform," Mayer said. "It's one of the most important issues facing Louisiana today. Whatever small part I can play to change the trajectory of our state at this unique opportunity, I'm going to do it."

The council is just one of seven advisory councils that include economic growth, education, health, crime, fiscal reform and emergency preparedness that Jindal plans to shape his platform for the next four years.

Each council will hear expert testimony and recommend to Jindal various options for reform. Jindal, who ran on a platform of ridding public corruption from government offices, expects to call an emergency ethics reform legislative session soon after he takes office Jan. 14.

"It is time for all of Louisiana to band together and declare war on corruption," Jindal said. "This is not political rhetoric. This is serious business."

This year, Louisiana's corruption seemed to reach an all time high. U.S. Rep. William Jefferson was indicted on 16 counts of bribery; U.S. Sen. David Vitter, was accused of visiting a prostitute; and former New Orleans City Councilman Oliver Thomas resigned after admitting to taking bribes, just a few of the more than 20 public corruption cases investigated this year.

And in 2005, former St. Tammany Parish Councilman Joe Impastato was federally indicted on extortion charges for an alleged hurricane debris removal kickback scam. His trial is scheduled for Feb. 19.

During the past year, those cases and others have reached national headlines, causing naysayers to question Louisiana's fiscal responsibility when asking for billions in hurricane recovery funds. The typecast of a Louisiana politician as corrupt is far reaching, Mayer said.

Corruption "is the baseline. It's the fundamental line," Mayer said. "If we can't solve that problem, other types of reform won't matter."

Mayer, who has lobbied Congress on a variety of real estate issues, said he's often looked down upon and even sneered at when lobbying in Washington D.C.

"You get tired of going to these things and everybody is looking at you like you are corrupt," Mayer said. "Taking a bold step is really critical at his juncture."

Mayer, who earned a master's degree in business administration from Tulane University and has four children and three grandsons, is a former chairman of the board of St. Tammany West Chamber of Commerce. He's also a commissioner of the St. Tammany Economic Development District and a secretary treasurer of GNO Inc., an economic development committee serving the greater New Orleans area.