



# NEWSLETTER NO. 9

## ELLEVATE LOUISIANA



**ELLEVATE LOUISIANA WAS FOUNDED IN 2020 TO EMPOWER WOMEN LEADERS THROUGHOUT LOUISIANA BY CONNECTING AND EDUCATING THEM ON THE CHALLENGES IMPACTING OUR STATE WITH DATA-DRIVEN, NON-PARTISAN SOLUTIONS TO MAKE A BETTER FUTURE FOR LOUISIANA.**

## *Understanding the Past while Planning the Future*

The state of Louisiana faces a fiscal shortfall starting on July 1, 2025, when a temporary .45¢ state sales tax and a 2% sales tax on business utilities are set to expire. Many say that these taxes should be allowed to expire because they were meant to be temporary. True enough, the original temporary 1¢ enacted in 2016 was meant to end in 2018, but the logic was that tax reforms would be enacted that would provide revenue when it expired. Despite spending six months in legislative session every year from 2016 to 2018, those reforms were never passed.

One of the primary reforms sought in 2016 was the elimination of the Federal Income Tax Deduction. Many, including myself, believed that Louisiana shouldn't tie its finances to the Federal Tax System. Having a Federal Income Tax Deduction in Louisiana meant that our tax revenues would increase when the Federal Government cut taxes and decrease when they raised taxes.



Ironically, this tie to Federal Taxes almost entirely accounts for why Louisiana was able to balance its 2018 budget with .45¢ rather than the expiring 1¢. The 2017 Federal Tax Cuts & Jobs Act (TCJA) would decrease federal income taxes in 2018, creating a surprise cash flow of \$400m for 2018! With this unexpected windfall in hand, the legislature replaced the expiring 1¢ with .45¢ that was allowed to remain in effect until July 1, 2025. Our problems with balancing our budget on a “temporary” revenue source were averted until that date, when another governor and legislature would be in office.

In the meantime, the legislature (followed by a popular vote) eliminated the Federal Income Tax Deduction in 2021. Rates were decreased to keep the elimination “revenue-neutral.” Interestingly, when you think about it, the state was able to bake that unexpected windfall from that reduction in Federal Taxes in 2018 into the new rates in 2021.

So here we are in 2024, facing the expiration of the .45¢ in the upcoming budget year. Many believe that the .45¢ should expire to lower Louisiana’s highest combined state and local sales tax rate in the country. However, if we allow the .45¢ to expire, we will still have the 5th highest rate. Others believe that the .45¢ must expire because the state has had budget surpluses for several years. However, those surpluses have been due to economic conditions in the post-COVID world that are expected to subside at about the same time that the .45¢ and the 2% sales tax on business utilities will expire.

Whatever we do to alleviate this fiscal shortfall and attempt to enact meaningful tax reform, we must remember a few things:

- If we let the .45¢ expire without replacing it with revenue-generating tax reforms, the cuts to higher education and healthcare WILL further fracture already fragile systems. Our tax system, which is antiquated, especially around sales tax, is not our only economic development problem. No matter what tax reform we enact, we will not improve economically without improving the educational attainment and health of our citizen workforce.
- Our sales tax system is in dire need of change. I will write more about this in future issues, but we have MANY structural problems that MUST be dealt with. Our tax rate is ranked the highest and our system is ranked at 3rd worst. After a small handful of outliers, most states have relatively streamlined and efficient systems.
- We must find a way to enact tax reform without creating an excessive burden on particular groups of citizens and businesses. Impacting citizens and business in a proportionately “fair” way is both difficult and necessary to achieve. Importantly, this fairness will be the key to passing tax reform, both in the legislature and at the ballot box.

It is almost certainly time for Louisiana to seriously address its tax structure, but it is also time to look at how we run this state and understand that we need to be running on all cylinders to move this state into a new economic era. We cannot keep kicking the can down the road for future generations to grapple with. The decisions made in the coming months will impact this state for a long, long time.

By: Julie Stokes, *Ellevate Louisiana CEO/Founder & President*

# *Q & A with Pilar Eble, Ellevate Louisiana's Board Chair*

## **PILAR, GIVE US A BRIEF HISTORY OF YOUR CAREER PATH AND HOW YOU CAME TO BE ELECTED CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT ELLEVATE LOUISIANA?**

I started my career in fundraising and community development at Tulane University, then the University of Mississippi. I took a short break to have my kids before moving into international education at the University of Minnesota, Morris. In 2015 I returned home to my alma mater at UL, Lafayette and back to my fundraising roots while also pursuing my Doctorate. Most recently, I am leading the advancement unit at Baton Rouge Community College as Vice Chancellor of Advancement and Education at the BRCC Foundation.

I met Julie on the campaign trail and found her brand of politics so refreshing; she was looking to solve problems by listening to both sides and coming up with a solution. When Julie shared her vision for Ellevate, I jumped at the chance to be involved in a bipartisan policy group. I was hopeful that for the first time my voice would be heard as a board member where I actively contributed to the organization's mission of empowering women leaders. I was an involved founder and board member. The first year I was asked to serve as Vice Chair to Willie Mount, which led to my election as Chair of the Board of Directors.



## **WHEN FIRST ELECTED, HOW DID YOU PERCEIVE YOUR ROLE AS CHAIR OF THE BOARD IN STRATEGIC PLANNING AND OVERSIGHT, AND WHAT, IF ANYTHING, HAS CHANGED DURING YOUR TIME ON THE BOARD?**

Because we are a new organization, there was not a clear framework around the role of the Board Chair. Therefore, after seeing Willie Mount's contributions as Chair, I tried to follow her lead. As time evolved, I have tried to lean in areas where I can offer expertise and where the needs are in our new organization. I have a knack for building new organizations and enjoy setting up processes, so that is where I have been leaning into the operational side of the house.

## **DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH THE BOARD TO OVERSEE THE ORGANIZATION'S FINANCIAL HEALTH?**

Working with the Board to oversee our financial health has been a collaborative process. This is one of Julie's areas of strength, so the organization has leaned on her leadership. We prioritize transparency and accountability, regularly reviewing financial reports and ensuring that our resources are allocated effectively to support our mission. The next frontier or goal is to build revenue sources through membership recruitment, fundraising and sponsorships. We are currently working on strategies to build out these areas.

## **HOW HAVE YOU MANAGED DIFFERING OPINIONS BETWEEN BOARD MEMBERS TO ENSURE CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE AND DECISION-MAKING?**



[Pilar speaking to Ellevate LA members at our 2024 Day at the Legislature on April 22, 2024.](#)

Managing differing opinions requires creating an environment where all voices are heard and respected. Ellevate encourages open dialogue and active listening, by our nature we are fostering a culture where constructive debate is seen as a strength. This is a group of strong willed and opinionated women that can have healthy debates, sometimes heated debates, but still respect each other and consider the voice of the membership and the objectives and goals of the organization. I see my role as making sure any position we take is fair, balanced and bipartisan, sticking to our mission. My favorite moments are when people have the courage to express a viewpoint they know may be unpopular, and that is where the magic happens because we are forced to listen and consider another way.

## **HOW DO YOU ENSURE THE BOARD'S COMPOSITION AND ACTIONS REFLECT THE ORGANIZATION'S VALUES AND CULTURE?**

When Julie began Ellevate and selected the first board, she was intentional about having balanced political viewpoints and representation across the state of Louisiana. I think it is important that the selection process maintain these values. The actions and views of the board need to be representational of the policy committees and have the input of the entire organization.



## WHAT DO YOU FEEL ARE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS THE CHAIR SO FAR, AND WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR FINAL YEAR ON THE BOARD?

I feel my biggest accomplishment thus far is setting the stage for creating a framework for people to be able to get involved in the committees. In furtherance of that goal, I was passionate about establishing the Membership & Development Committee. Another area I have concentrated on has been setting focused goals for fundraising and membership retention. Finally, I have relied on my experience with organization and operations to set up the infrastructure for future growth. My goal is not only that Ellevate will continue to grow, but that it will continue to put forth good public policy while supporting, uplifting and engaging women throughout the state because the organization is providing what they are looking for.

## WHERE DO YOU HOPE TO SEE ELLEVATE LOUISIANA IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

In the next five years, I hope to see Ellevate Louisiana become a leading voice in Louisiana policy decisions, known for its thoughtful policy stances and impactful advocacy. I envision a larger, more diverse membership base and deeper partnerships with other organizations. Our goal is to amplify our influence and continue empowering women to lead and make a difference in their communities and beyond.



By: Yvonne Krumins, *Ellevate Louisiana Policy Coordinator*



**PILAR EBLE, ED.D.**  
VICE CHANCELLOR FOR INSTITUTIONAL  
ADVANCEMENT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BRCC

# TIPSS for Coping with Back-to-School Stress

Now that we are fully immersed in the hectic schedules of the post “back-to-school” transition, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed by all of the responsibilities we have, particularly as women. Summertime can feel like a reprieve in many ways from the significant number of responsibilities we manage daily. At the essence of summer is society-approved permission to pause. Transitioning back into a full fall schedule can feel stressful for both adults and children as we strive to find harmony in our schedules during this busy season.



## BE INTENTIONAL WITH YOUR TIME

What a deep tissue massage can do for the body, silence and stillness can do for the soul. Be intentional about how you use your time so that the quality of your daily moments is as much of a focus as the quantity of tasks accomplished. For example, try to build in brain breaks during the day where you can unplug and sit in silence or surround yourself in nature. Put your phone on airplane mode to protect this precious time during our day (no media scrolling allowed.) Recent research has shown that 12 minutes of daily meditation can significantly reduce cortisol levels that impact stress. The good news? This time does not need to be continuous. One minute twelve times per day will work equally as well.

## INVITE HARMONY VERSUS BALANCE

Here’s a gentle reminder that mindset matters. Striving to find a balance between work, home and school obligations may not be realistic. Acknowledging that some days one of these things may take precedent over the others allows for flexibility in how we choose both what and who will get our time and attention. It may also reduce any guilt we have regarding not being able to do all of the things for all of the people in our lives. Give yourself some grace to be human. Finding your individual harmony in what activities you prioritize each day (and not feeling guilty about leaving some things on the to do list) will help you find our groove during this fall season.



## PERFECT YOUR ROUTINES AND GET ORGANIZED

While we often have the best intentions at the beginning of the school year to be as organized as Marie Kondo, real life can get in the way. This is a great time to evaluate where the little things are contributing to the most stress in your life. Kids having trouble finding their socks & shoes every morning? How about forgetting a towel for swim practice in the mad dash out of the door? It’s time to purchase containers to keep by the doors and in your car to create a space for those lost items so that everything has a place. Keep losing your car keys in the hustle and bustle of getting out of the door?

Air tags work wonders for pinging lost items. This is one area where small changes can make a huge difference in being pro-active to keep stress levels at a minimum. Involving your children in this process can also help them develop executive functioning skills and create healthy habits as they get older for keeping their life as organized as possible.



## STRESS IN CHILDREN

Anxiety can present as irritability in children. School can be incredibly stressful for children for so many reasons. When you layer on extra-curricular activities that are ramping up this time of year, kids can feel overwhelmed and may not have the vocabulary to articulate why they are feeling this way. Try giving them space in the car after school before asking questions about how their day went. Embracing and normalizing silence on the ride home will help them develop healthy habits for their own self-care. As a psychologist, I often recommend creating space in the evening routine before bed where you have dedicated one-on-one time for your child. This fifteen minute time can be called “worry time” where your child is free to talk to you about anything that they may be worried about. It’s important to remember that this is not a time to create solutions to these worries but just to hold space for your child to share and to validate their emotions through reflective listening. No worries to report? Change the title to “talk time” and make sure that your child knows the time is available unconditionally - not just when worries are present.

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

When stress levels rise, communication can sometimes be one of the first things to fail. Author Brene Brown recommends a check-in with your partner in the evenings to verbally quantify and communicate to each other where each person is emotionally and physically. For example, if you have had a long day and are exhausted, you may be at “20%.” If your partner reports that they are at a number that would bring the total to less than 100%, then Brown suggests talking with each other to create a “kindness plan” to decide how to cover the rest of the day’s responsibilities. It may be a time to scrap the cooking and order take-out or let the laundry wait until another day. According to Brown, marriage is never 50/50 and when you can’t cover for your partner when your percentage is low, it’s best to work together to create an action plan rather than letting stress and passive-aggressive behavior reign from what goes unsaid. This can also work with teenage children who may feel more comfortable giving you a quick number rather than describing the trials and tribulations of their day.



**LACEY ELLIS, PH.D.**  
CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST  
OWNER, ACORN PEDIATRIC CONSULTING



ELLEVATE  
LOUISIANA



# POLICY SUMMIT

September 26, 2024



8:00AM - 4:30AM



City Club of Baton Rouge

IN PERSON | MEMBERS ONLY

ANNUAL MEETING | FIVE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS | LUNCH



**SPEAKER SCHEDULE**



## TAXATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 8:30AM - 9:30AM



**SUSAN BOURGEOIS**  
SECRETARY, LED



**RICHARD NELSON, J.D.**  
SECRETARY, LDR

## HEALTH & WELLNESS 9:45AM - 10:45AM



**RALPH ABRAHAM, M.D.**  
SURGEON GENERAL



**MICHAEL HARRINGTON, MBA, MA**  
SECRETARY, LDH



**CHRISTINE LOBRE, MHS, MPH, LPC**  
LDH



**KATHLEEN RICHEY, J.D.**  
STATE OF LA CHILD OMBUDSMAN



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**WORKFORCE &  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
11:00AM - 12:00PM**



**DR. TRISTAN DENLEY**  
LA BOARD OF REGENTS



**DR. KIM HUNTER REED**  
COMMISSIONER  
LA BOARD OF REGENTS



**OSMAR PADILLA, MS LHRD**  
OFFICE OF WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT



**DR. TOYA TEAMER**  
TEAMER STRATEGY  
GROUP, LLC

**EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION & K-12  
1:45PM - 2:45PM**



**SIMONE CHAMPAGNE**  
MEMBER AT-LARGE  
BESE



**DR. SABRAH KINGHAM**  
SR. EDUCATION ADVISOR  
OFFICE OF THE GOV.



**DR. JANET POPE**  
LA SCHOOL BOARDS  
ASSOCIATION



**CAROLINE ROEMER**  
LA ASSOC. OF PUBLIC  
CHARTER SCHOOLS

**ENVIRONMENT &  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
3:00PM - 4:00PM**



**GREG GRANDY**  
CPRA



**TYLER GRAY, J.D., MBA**  
SECRETARY, DENR



**JODY MONTELARO, J.D.**  
ENERGY

## A Candid Conversation Series

Women's Issues in Louisiana

Moderator: Julie Stokes,  
President and CEO of Ellevate Louisiana



**LOCATION:**  
Salon22  
2407 Bienville  
NOLA

You're invited to A **Candid Conversation Series** about women's issues in Louisiana.

In this 4-part program, hosted by **Ellevate Louisiana** and **Salon22**, we'll provide a platform for open and honest discussions on the challenges and opportunities facing women in our state.

Let's share experiences, learn from one another, and work towards meaningful change.

Don't miss this chance to further build our inspiring and empowering community.



### Women's Health:

Monday, 9/16—8:30am

A vital discussion on women's health issues in Louisiana, focusing on health care equities. This session will feature insights from health professionals and advocates, offering a platform to share experiences, ask questions, and collaborate on solutions.



### Political Participation:

Wednesday, 10/2—5:30pm

A panel discussing the lack of female elected officials in Louisiana. We'll explore barriers hindering women in politics, from cultural norms to electoral systems. Panelists, including current officials and activists, will propose solutions and highlight successful strategies for achieving gender equity in state leadership.



### Economic Security:

Wednesday, 10/23—5:30pm

Women face persistent income disparities and limited access to higher-paying roles, with systemic occupational segregation and educational opportunities being significant factors. The session will highlight challenges exacerbated by inadequate access to affordable healthcare and housing.



### Public Discourse:

Wednesday, 10/30—5:30pm

We'll review the successful steps to Moderating Public Discourse from earning conversational trust to knowing when it is time to exit. With the upcoming Presidential election and the polarizing issues at hand, explore ways in which you can have meaningful conversations through authenticity, humor, and finding ways to gently deflect without alienating others.



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## Meet the Speakers



**Women's Health:**  
Monday, 9/16  
8:30am

A special collaboration with Louisiana Public Health Institute's Health HER-Izons series.



Shelina Davis,  
MPH, MSW, CEO  
Louisiana Public  
Health Institute



Jennifer Avegno, M.D.,  
Director,  
New Orleans Health  
Department



Veronica Gillispie-Bell,  
M.D., Board Certified  
OB/GYN Ochsner Health  
System



**Political Participation:**  
Wednesday, 10/2  
5:30pm

Exploring barriers that hinder women in politics.



Helena Moreno,  
Councilmember  
New Orleans City  
Council



Aimee Adatto Freeman,  
District 98 LA House  
of Representatives & Aimee  
Freeman Consulting



Cassie Alsfeld,  
Founder & CEO  
Shoreline  
Strategies, LLC



**Economic Security:**  
Wednesday, 10/23  
5:30pm

Discussing income disparities and the gender pay gap.



Charmaine Caccioppi,  
Executive VP &  
CEO United Way  
of Southeast  
Louisiana



Julie Schwam Harris,  
Consultant and  
Volunteer Advocate



Paula Polito, Ph.D., MBA,  
Owner Beary Cherry  
Tree Child  
Development Center



**Public Discourse:**  
Wednesday, 10/30  
5:30pm

Earning conversational trust and knowing when to exit.



Kathy Kliebert,  
Healthcare  
Consulting,  
Former LDH  
Secretary



Sandra Lombana  
Lindquist,  
President & CEO  
New Orleans Chamber  
of Commerce



Jasmine Brown  
DeRousselle, J.D.,  
Chief External  
Affairs Officer,  
GNO, Inc.