



NEWSLETTER

ELLEVATE LOUISIANA



ELLEVATE LOUISIANA'S MISSION IS TO EMPOWER WOMEN LEADERS THROUGHOUT LOUISIANA BY CONNECTING & EDUCATING THEM ON THE CHALLENGES IMPACTING OUR STATE & DATA-DRIVEN, NON-PARTISAN SOLUTIONS TO USHER IN A NEW COMPETITIVENESS FOR OUR STATE.



JULIE STOKES, PRESIDENT & CEO

When I assembled Ellevate Louisiana's bipartisan Founding Members, I felt so encouraged by their excitement over all that Ellevate could become. We conceptualized it step by step, letting its development happen organically so that we didn't rush it or force it. When we tripled in size during the COVID pandemic, we knew we had something special. When we tripled membership again over 2022 and 2023, we knew it was time to take it to the next level. For us, that means tackling real policy issues and getting our message of bipartisanship and respect for one another's differences out to the masses. As it has been since inception, Ellevate's policy priorities are organized around five policy areas.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & K-12

One of Ellevate's key focus areas since inception is funding for **early care and education** in Louisiana. We consider this to be of urgent importance to families, to growing our workforce, and to the futures of our youngest citizens. We thank Gov. Landry for maintaining the \$87M for early care and education in his executive budget. That shows us that the new administration cares about the needs of families.



TAXATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We are eagerly awaiting the **restructuring plan for LED** and working with new LED Secretary, Susan Bonnett Bourgeois. On the **taxation** front, we are spending this year educating our members so that we can increase our understanding of this key policy area in 2025.

WORKFORCE & HIGHER EDUCATION

The Board of Regent's Pathway to 2030, the work done by our Board Member, now Secretary of Louisiana's Workforce Commission, Susie Schowen, and the persistence of **critical workforce shortages** in our state, have led us to prioritize workforce development as another key focus area. We are anxious to see the ideas that evolve in the upcoming session relative to this priority. We are also hopeful

that the new administration will **continue to fund Higher Education** at levels that enable our students to proudly choose Louisiana schools for their education and enable our state to grow its participating workforce, thereby serving as a catalyst for the growth of industry.



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Ellevate has prioritized **home and community-based supports for long term care** since its inception. It is a quality-of-life issue for which our citizens deserve choices. A strong step forward was made last year in the creation of the Community Options Waiver Fund and continuing to fund it is important to our elders. Our H&W committee is also committed to funding for behavioral health and domestic violence victims. **Behavioral health** is a significant driver for many of Louisiana's issues like crime, poor health, and educational outcomes. Therefore, it is important to support the development of a **statewide crisis stabilization system** and the **expansion of child and adolescent behavioral health services**. Louisiana was recently called out by the Legislative Auditor as having inadequate services for **domestic violence** victims. Last year, for the first time, \$7m was budgeted for shelters across the state to keep victims safe. It is not in the Executive Budget this year, and we are advocating for the Governor or Legislature to add it back. Additionally, many **Medicaid reimbursement rates** have not been adjusted in over a decade. This creates inadequate reimbursements to healthcare providers and thus a shortage of providers, resulting in lack of access to care. A healthy population supports a vision of a productive Louisiana. Finally, over the last several years, the **child welfare system** has been under intense scrutiny for avoidable child deaths and lack of effective foster care and adoption support. Louisiana must have a strong child welfare system if we want to stop the cycle of abuse and neglect.



ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Our members are working to understand the intertwined responsibilities of all the departments that manage Louisiana's environment: DEQ, Wildlife & Fisheries, CPRA, DENR, and even DOTD. We are expressly watching as Louisiana settles the question of letting CPRA remain its own agency or moving it inside of DENR. It is our ardent belief that **CPRA should remain its own agency with proper funding** to maintain and restore our coast.

A Louisiana without land is like a person without a body. Our coastline is disappearing at an alarming pace; this is an existential crisis that we face. Funding from BP is scheduled to deplete in the year 2032. The prior administration committed to putting a portion of every surplus to CPRA. We earnestly hope that the current administration will prioritize the funding of this pressing priority.

Louisiana's Workforce Shortage



Louisiana is experiencing a time of very low unemployment amongst its working citizens. However, we also have one of the lowest Labor Force Participation (LFP) rates in the U.S. Declining LFP rates are a symptom of several factors, including the aging population, lack of quality childcare, and lack of required education or skills. As we strive to bring quality jobs to Louisiana, it is important that we look for ways to get more unengaged citizens engaged in the workforce. While this is not a new issue, neither locally nor nationally, it is at the forefront of public attention right now in our post-Covid world where help is so tough to find. The Louisiana Board of Regents addressed some of these issues in 2019 when it unveiled its bold Pathway to 2030. The goal of

Pathway is for 60% of all working age adults [ages 25-64] in Louisiana hold a degree or credential of value by 2030. Regents' goal has three prongs: (1) Increase postsecondary enrollment; (2) increase student success; (3) recognize all degrees and credentials of value.

INCREASE POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT

Increasing postsecondary enrollment begins with K-12 awareness and engagement. In addition to the well-known TOPS merit-based scholarship program there is also the lesser-known TOPS Tech Award. This award provides up to two years of skill or occupational training to be pursued at an accredited Louisiana postsecondary institution that offers a vocational or technical education certificate/diploma. However, the TOPS Tech award has been historically underutilized due to poor engagement early on. Making sure all high school students are aware of TOPS Tech should be a goal.

INCREASE STUDENT SUCCESS

Dual enrollment (DE) has proven to be a good a way to increase student success. Aside from earning credit, DE has a positive impact on both high school graduation rates and college success and completion.

Unfortunately, this valuable program is often underutilized

for historically marginalized learners. DE is often less accessible at schools that serve lower-income communities and communities of color, and when available, participation rates are low. Registered Apprenticeships may offer an alternative for some students. These are federally regulated "earn and learn" strategies that provide a career pathway to students through both hands-on experiences and classroom training. Apprenticeships can be a bridge between student engagement and workforce participation.



Louisiana's Workforce Shortage, Cont'd.

RECOGNIZE ALL DEGREES & CREDENTIALS OF VALUE

To increase the number of adults with credentials of value, the M.J. Foster Promise Program was created to provide free education for credentials of value to Louisiana residents aged 21 years and older. However, some community colleges still report trouble enrolling adult students even if free credential classes are offered, bringing to light the fact that students have financial difficulty beyond the cost of classes like transportation and childcare. The need to meet students where they are is a developing conversation.



Education at all levels is one of the keys to a robust workforce. We need to invest in birth-through-three early care and education programs to stop the cycle of remediation at the K-12 level and support parents who work and/or attend school. We also need continued support of higher education to give our future workforce the education, training, and supports they need to be successful. When we invest in our youth, we create an environment that fosters a thriving workforce!

By: Julie Stokes and Yvonne Krumins, *Ellevate Louisiana*



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Bridging Political Divides through Strength-Based Leadership

In today's politically charged environment, it's easy to focus on our differences rather than what unites us. As members of Ellevate, a collective of visionary women leaders in Louisiana, we understand the power of leadership that celebrates strengths. I recently wrote a piece that highlighted the importance of recognizing and leveraging personal strengths for effective leadership. Let's extend this concept to appreciate our diverse political views, fostering a climate of respect and collaboration essential for creating shaping policies that usher in a new competitiveness for our State.



1. RECOGNIZE THE STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

- Leadership Tip: Acknowledge your personal strengths.
- Application to Bridging Political Divides: Acknowledge that diverse political perspectives stem from unique experiences, values, and strengths. Just as individual strengths contribute to a team's success, different political views can offer a broader understanding of issues, leading to more comprehensive and inclusive policies. Encourage open dialogues where members feel valued for their contributions, not judged for their political stance.



2. INTERNALIZE THE VALUE OF DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

- Original Tip: Accept and internalize your personal strengths.
- Application to Political Views: Embrace the idea that encountering differing political views isn't an obstacle but an opportunity to enrich our understanding and solutions. By accepting this reality and internalizing this belief, we can shift from defensive reactions to curiosity, asking questions to deepen our insight into alternative viewpoints. This shift is crucial for building bridges and finding common ground in policy discussions.

3. LEVERAGE DIVERSITY FOR COLLABORATIVE POLICYMAKING

- Original Tip: Leverage strengths to break through barriers.

• Application to Political Views: Use the diversity of political perspectives as a strategic asset in policy development. By leveraging these differences, we can craft policies that are more resilient, equitable, and reflective of the community's needs. Let's all work collaboratively so members can bring their unique insights to tackle issues, ensuring policies benefit from the collective wisdom of varied political viewpoints.

CONCLUSION

In embracing our differences as strengths, we pave the way for more effective, inclusive, and innovative policymaking. By recognizing, accepting, internalizing, and leveraging the diverse political views within Ellevate, we can transcend partisanship, fostering a culture of respect and collaboration. This approach not only enhances our leadership but also sets a precedent for how diverse groups can work together for the betterment of Louisiana. Let's commit to appreciating each other's differences as much as we do our strengths, using our collective power to create policies that reflect our shared vision for a prosperous and united community.



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Its The Impact



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