



PAR: Storm adds issues on economy

Capitol news bureau

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, public policies at the federal, state and local levels must be adapted to rebuild and stabilize the Louisiana economy, a private think tank stated in a news release Tuesday.

The Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, which does research and offers suggestion to government, has adapted its research agenda to conform to the changing needs of Louisiana.

"PAR will focus its research efforts specifically on state-level public policies in the areas of state finance, education, health care and oversight/transparency," said PAR President Jim Brandt in the news release.

The state faced a \$10 billion backlog in construction projects prior to Katrina's destruction. That amount will multiply as damage estimates are developed, he said.

"And, as billions of dollars in rebuilding and recovery contracts are awarded, oversight and transparency requirements will be critical to prevent fraud and corruption," the news release said.

Among PAR's areas of focus will be:

- n Will the state's limit on annual bonded indebtedness, which is around \$313 million, need to be relaxed?
- n Should the state's so-called rainy-day fund be re-examined?
- n Will the state need to tap its \$3 billion in trust funds to pay debts and continue to provide services?
- n Should the constitutional balanced budget requirement and expenditure limit be relaxed? How about the prohibition against borrowing for current spending?
- n Are personal income tax breaks required to help citizens rebound and encourage them to stay?
- n What state policies can be developed to help local communities deal with the strain of shifting populations?
- n How can the state ensure that expropriation rights are not abused as the

area is redeveloped?

- n Is there a need to adjust the property tax laws for affected areas?
- n Will previously allocated funds travel to districts and institutions where students are newly enrolled?
- n Should the legal requirements for certified teachers be adjusted?
- n How are public hospital services going to be provided?
- n What will be the impact on plans to replace the charity hospitals in Baton Rouge and New Orleans?
- n How will the additional demand for health care be funded?
- n What will be the impact on the state's highway funding priority list?
- n Should the state take a role in repairing local roads?
- n How can federal road funds best be leveraged?
- n What mechanisms will assure the proper monitoring of emergency contracts to ensure fairness and transparency as aid dollars are spent?

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