



## Opinion

### A historic challenge

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#### **Blanco's talk about the special session being a "Waterloo" is historically inaccurate. But it could be her final battle.**

By **JR Ball** , *Executive Editor*

Any question on the deplorable state of education in Louisiana was answered with a resounding "we're still stupid" last week when our esteemed governor uncorked this fact-challenged gem in the midst of her special session from hell:

"We're not going to come back to have another Waterloo," she declared after legislators rejected the bulk of her free-spending agenda. "We're going to come back to have success."

Memo to Kathleen Blanco, our governor and a woman who continues to list public school teacher as her chosen profession: It's one Waterloo and through.

For those who also spent their K-12 years being dumbed down in Louisiana schools, Waterloo was the 1815 epic and final battle for a short little French emperor and general by the name of Napoleon Bonaparte. If that name sounds familiar it should; he's the guy who established something called the Napoleonic Code, which is the basis of law used in Louisiana to prosecute everyone except corrupt politicians.

Seriously, if the state's highest elected official--and a former public school teacher at Breaux Bridge High--is in need of a remedial history course, what chance do the rest of the natives have?

You just can't declare a humongous defeat a personal Waterloo, as Blanco did, and then say you're going to rally the troops to victory. Even the folks at Merriam-Webster say it ain't so, defining "Waterloo" as "a decisive or final defeat or setback."

The governor could have vowed she and her dole-out-the-cash plans would make like Lazarus and rise from the dead. She could have even suggested this political bombing was her Pearl Harbor and with FDR-like

solemnity declared this session will live in infamy, but the stretch there would be believing she has the ammunition to come back and drop the big ones on her legislative foes.

Compounding Blanco's historical inaccuracy is this tidbit: At least the French army put up a nasty fight--something it seemingly hasn't done since. Blanco did nothing of the sort, launching the battle with a bold all-or-nothing proclamation before promptly retreating from one defensive position to the next before calling it quits six days into a scheduled 10-day session.

If we're going to be tossing around annihilation analogies, what happened to Blanco is more akin to what Custer experienced at Little Big Horn. But at least Mrs. Blanco gets to keep her hair.

Anything is possible when the subject is politics in Louisiana, but can you envision a plausible scenario where she rallies from such a monstrous slap-in-the-face defeat? Not since UL-Lafayette ended its football season has someone or something from the Cajun capital been so thoroughly destroyed.

And for Blanco to blame Washington-style politics for her inability to freely spend surplus revenue is a joke. Does anyone believe that Republicans, who these days love to bloat budgets as much as the most fervent tax-and-spend liberal, really give a damn about fiscal responsibility? Then explain the existence of rural and urban slush funds and billions of other imprudent expenses. What the Dumbos did was simply seize on the cries of independent groups like the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and PAR to stop the fiscal insanity.

Blanco's problem is that her agenda of share-the-wealth road funding, homeowner insurance rebate checks, and pay raises for teachers, police officers, firefighters and almost everyone else on the public payroll was as ill-fated as Napoleon's decision to fight on Russian soil in the winter.

There were victories on the insurance, child care tax credit and business incentive fronts, but Blanco's hurry-up-and-spend-it philosophy got a frosty reception from legislators because it was viewed as 1) irresponsibly committing a potentially short-term windfall to long-term expenses, 2) a failure to address pressing economic development and higher education issues, or 3) a poorly disguised attempt to buy votes for next year's election.

Now if we can just exile Blanco to Saint Helena --the island in the South Atlantic, not the parish north of Livingston--then we might have something.