



Our view: Now it's time for the voters to engage

September 6, 2007

At the end of the day today, voters will know who has qualified to run for public offices locally and statewide.

Candidates will be full of promises, positions and plans but may be short of specifics. It's easy to get lost in the rhetoric.

Now is not the time for voters to be confused about where candidates stand on issues that will affect us.

Voters should press candidates to make clear statements that outline policy proposals. Sound bites and campaign slogans only go so far.

Louisiana citizens need to change their state, and elections always provide that opportunity. This particular election season is especially important.

About half of the seats in the Louisiana Legislature are on the ballot. Term limits that take effect this year make long-time politicians ineligible for re-election to their current offices. Gov. Kathleen Blanco is not running for a second term. The field is wide open in state politics, and many new faces are seeking votes. Some may have already knocked on your door.

You know what you want for your state: progress, growth, efficient management, cost-conscious government. You need to find out how the candidates plan to affect those matters. You need to ask.

With that in mind, the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana has published "Questioning Candidates Beyond the Platitudes."

The report will help voters find out from candidates what they think needs to change and how they plan to change it if elected.

As PAR sees it there are five policy areas that require office holders to make distinct choices from among viable options for action.

"While research findings are certainly available to draw upon in each of these areas, several distinct, often mutually exclusive, paths to reform are evident. Each candidate's judgment will have to come into play," the PAR report states.

The five policy areas discussed are:

- Restructuring tax and spending policies
- Strengthening the workforce through educational realignment
- Meeting the standards of education accountability
- Funding health care for the uninsured

- Funding the Big Ticket needs (transportation, retirement systems, coastal protection/restoration and rebuilding storm-damaged areas)

The future depends on voters electing candidates who understand the scope of the state's challenges, are capable of leading in a time of much-needed change, are committed to ethical behavior and who appreciate the desire of the citizens who want good things to happen.

- "Questioning Candidates beyond the Platitudes" can be accessed on PAR's Web site at www.la-par.org.