

## Watch-dog group argues to open governor's office records; Gov. Bobby Jindal still opposed

By **Bill Barrow**, *The Times-Picayune*

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The Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana has renewed its call to remove the Louisiana governor's broad exception to the public records law. The group is backing [Senate Bill 593](#) by Sen. Robert Adley, R-Benton, and [House Bill 307](#) by Rep. Wayne Waddell, R-Shreveport. Waddell also has two other records bills: [House Bill 499](#) and [House Bill 501](#).

All of the proposals await action in their respective chambers' Governmental Affairs Committee. Waddell and Adley are taking slightly different approaches, but the theme of their effort is the same: The governor's office should open all of its records, with only rarely justified exceptions, and everything -- including anything that is privileged -- should be saved and turned over to the State Archives for public review at some point after a governor leaves office.

[Gov. Bobby Jindal](#), who campaigned as a champion of government transparency, is opposed to all of the bills, just as he was in 2008 and 2009. Adley and Waddell said they've been told the details are "non-negotiable."

PAR said in a statement this week that Jindal has expanded the shield since taking office. Jindal signed a change to the open records law last year that opened some of his travel records after the fact and rewrote the office's exception to records that part of the governor's "deliberative process." But it also put a shield on budget preparation documents, including those prepared by state agencies outside the governor's executive staff, for six months after their creation. The new law also left in place the right of the governor's office to invoke a gag in the name of the governor's security and left sealed all "intraoffice communication."

The practical effects of that law, PAR said, "narrowed the (previously blanket) exception somewhat" but still "stifles debate on major decisions by keeping important and useful information out of public view." The statement added: "While some limited records exceptions for the governor may be in order, the ones that are currently in law are overly broad and should be corrected this session."

Adley expressed optimism that he can corral the votes he needs to get his bill out of committee. Waddell is less optimistic, citing the overwhelmingly pro-administration makeup of the House panel. But, he said, he will push for a hearing before the session concludes.