

Government watchdog leader retiring

Nonprofit group is fixture at La. Capitol

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By Jan Moller

Capital bureau

BATON ROUGE -- Jim Brandt, who has headed the state's largest government-watchdog group since 1999, is retiring, the Public Affairs Research Council announced Thursday.

Brandt gave no reason for stepping down, but he said in a news release that the organization will remain in capable hands after he leaves at the end of the year.

"The challenges Louisiana faces are diverse and complex, and PAR continues to play an important role in defining and disseminating solution-focused research," Brandt said. "I am honored to have been part of it."

Brandt's retirement caps a 40-year career in government research and administration that includes a 12-year stint as president and CEO of the Bureau of Governmental Research in New Orleans.

A nonprofit watchdog group financed by foundations, corporate grants and individual donations, PAR is a frequent presence at the state Capitol and issues a steady stream of reports and commentaries on a range of public policy issues.

Brandt's replacement as president will be chosen by a transition committee led by James Richardson, a Louisiana State University economics professor who also is chairman of PAR's research committee.

The group is accepting applications through Aug. 23. A position announcement will be posted on the group's website, www.la-par.org.