

# **Council of Bayou Chambers**

**Gubernatorial Forum**

**Tuesday, August 26, 2003**

**Houma-Terrebonne Civic Center**

**6:00 – 8:00 PM**

## **PREAMBLE**

WELCOME FROM THE COUNCIL OF BAYOU CHAMBERS:

THIBODAUX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

THE CHAMBER OF LAFOURCHE & THE BAYOU REGION

ST. MARY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

HOUMA-TERREBONNE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ASSUMPTION CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

THANK YOU TO THE HOUMA-TERREBONNE CIVIC CENTER FOR ALLOWING US THE USE OF THEIR WONDERFUL FACILITY.

WE THE PEOPLE OF THIS PART OF THE GREAT STATE OF LOUISIANA, IN ORDER TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY, AS WELL AS THE CONCERN FOR THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE TOTAL COMMUNITY, DO STAND BEFORE YOU UNITED AS THE BAYOU REGION.

A LAND OF NEARLY 300,000 PEOPLE, RICH IN CATTLE FARMING, AGRICULTURE, FISHING AND OIL & GAS. A LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

WITH AN ACCREDITED UNIVERSITY, NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY IN THIBODAUX, AS WELL AS TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN LAFOURCHE, TERREBONNE AND ST. MARY PARISHES, AND A COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN TERREBONNE PARISH. A LAND OF PRODUCTIVITY WITH PORT FOURCHON IN LAFOURCHE PARISH, PORT OF TERREBONNE, THE PORT OF WEST ST. MARY AND THE PORT OF MORGAN CITY, NOT TO MENTION THE PRIVATE PORTS AS WELL WHICH UTILIZE THE INTRACOASTAL CANAL. A LAND OF ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND DIVERSITY WITH MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN SHIPBUILDING, HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION AND RETAIL, AND A COMBINED TOTAL OF OVER 139 MILLION DOLLARS IN SALES TAX COLLECTIONS IN 2000. ALTHOUGH TODAY WE LIVE WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF TERRORIST ATTACKS, WE ALSO LIVE WITH THE CERTAINTY THAT WE WILL BE ATTACKED BY THE FEROCITY OF HURRICANES.

THE SOUTHEAST PART OF LOUISIANA HAS BECOME MUCH MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO HURRICANES. ALTHOUGH POWERFUL CATEGORY 3, 4 AND 5 HURRICANES ARE EXTREMELY DESTRUCTIVE, EXPERIENCING THE MOST POWERFUL PART OF SUCH A STORM IS A RARE OCCURRENCE.

TROPICAL STORMS, CATEGORY 1 AND 2 HURRICANES, AND PERSISTENT SOUTHEAST WINDS ARE COMMON EVENTS AND YEARS AGO WERE NOT A SEVERE PROBLEM. WITH LARGE SUBSIDENCE RATES ON OUR DEVELOPED LANDS, WETLAND LOSS, REDUCED BARRIER ISLANDS, AND SEA LEVEL RISE, WEAK WEATHER SYSTEMS NOW CAUSE COSTLY LIFE-THREATENING FLOODING. THESE EVENTS NOW CAUSE PROBLEMS AS MUCH AS 60 MILES INLAND.

TROPICAL STORM ISIDORE AND HURRICANE LILI DEMONSTRATED THAT VERY WEAK PARTS OF THESE STORMS CAN CAUSE FLOODING 30 MILES INLAND, WITH WATER LEVELS NEAR 7 FT. THESE WATER LEVELS OVERTOPPED LEVEES INCLUDING THOSE IN THE LAKE PONCHARTRAIN AREA. OUR BARRIER ISLANDS EXPERIENCED A GREAT DEAL OF DAMAGE, WITH GRAND ISLE LEFT DEFENSELESS DUE TO STORM EROSION. CONTINUED DELAYS ON PROJECTS TO BUILD AND RESTORE FLOOD PROTECTION FOR SOUTH LOUISIANA WILL LEAD TO DEGRADATION OF AN IMPORTANT PART OF LOUISIANA AND THE UNITED STATES.

IF WE TAKE CARE OF OUR THREATS FROM HURRICANES AND EVACUATION NEEDS, THEN WE HAVE SOLVED MANY OF OUR ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS.

OTHER PLACES NEED PROJECTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. WE DON'T. THIS AREA HAS TREMENDOUS ECONOMIC VITALITY, BUT NEEDS PROJECTS TO MAINTAIN ITS SUCCESS. THIS AREA IS THE HEART OF TWO (2) OF THE MOST IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF LOUISIANA'S CONTRIBUTION OF NATURAL INTEREST; THAT OF ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SEAFOOD PRODUCTION. IF IT SOUNDS LIKE I AM PROUD OF THIS AREA, I AM., AND IF IT SOUNDS LIKE I FEAR FOR ITS FUTURE, I DO. IF IT SOUNDS AS THOUGH I AM SAYING THAT THE NEXT GOVERNOR WILL BE CRUCIAL IN DECIDING OUR ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURE, THERE IS NO DOUBT. THESE THOUGHTS REFLECT WHAT MANY IN OUR AREA BELIEVE. OUR EXISTENCE AS A PEOPLE AND A PLACE ARE DEPENDENT ON THE NEXT GOVERNOR'S SKILL, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE AREA IS DEPENDENT ON THE NEXT GOVERNOR'S WILL TO DEAL WITH THESE EXTREMELY COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT ISSUES.