



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **STATE SENATE BEGINS WORK OF 2009 REGULAR SESSION**

### **SENATORS APPEL, MORRELL & CLAITOR OFFICIALLY SEATED AS NEW MEMBERS**

Members of the Louisiana State Senate began the work of the 2009 Regular Session of the State Legislature at noon Monday, April 27, 2009. This regular session is limited to the discussion of specific spending and tax matters with lawmakers allowed to pre-file up to five bills of a general nature. With the looming state budget shortfall topping \$1.7 billion to keep state government and programs operating as they do now, the focus on fiscal issues is particularly important this year.

"We have a constitutional responsibility to adopt a balanced budget," Senate President Joel Chaisson (D-Destrehan) said. "Unlike the federal government, state government in Louisiana does not have the option to deficit spend and that is how it should be. There are cuts which need to be made and we will have no choice but to make them. However, we also have an obligation to make sure that we don't adversely affect vital services in such a way that will result in long term harm to our citizens and our state. Therefore, I encourage my colleagues to engage in an open and honest debate regarding all available options for adopting a balanced budget which is in the best interest of Louisiana and all of it's people."

Beyond the immediate state budget issues, legislators will consider changes in the State Constitution and state law to give the state more flexibility in making budget decisions when state revenues fall in future years. Right now with a significant portion of the state general fund revenue mostly protected from budget cuts if there is a budget deficit during the fiscal year, higher education and health care services bear the brunt of the budget axe. Lawmakers will discuss new budgeting procedures to allow more options when it comes to reducing state spending.

"It is clear that the state revenue problems we are experiencing this year are not going away for some time," Senate President Pro-Tempore Sharon Weston Broome said. "With that in mind, it is vital that we do what we can to halt the draining of available state resources away from our

colleges and universities and health care programs that are key to improving our families, our children, our communities and our state."

As part of the first day of business, newly elected State Senators Conrad Appel (R-Metairie), Jean-Paul "JP" Morrell (D-New Orleans) and Dan Claitor (R-Baton Rouge) officially took their seats. Senator Appel takes the District 9 seat which includes most of Metairie, Elmwood and part of Old Jefferson in Jefferson Parish. Senator Morrell, who previously served in the House of Representatives, is representing District 3 which includes parts of the New Orleans lakefront, Gentilly, Faubourg Marigny, Bywater, Algiers point, Gretna, Harvey and Marrero. Senator Claitor takes the District 16 seat which runs from the lakes of LSU to the southeastern corner of East Baton Rouge Parish.



Before the opening of the regular session, state senators pre-filed 320 bills. Citizens can read and print the bills and other legislative measures as well check on committee schedules and agendas via the Internet at <http://senate.legis.state.la.us> or [www.legis.state.la.us](http://www.legis.state.la.us) . The public can also monitor Senate proceedings live on the Internet on the Senate Web site or the joint legislative site, [www.legis.state.la.us](http://www.legis.state.la.us) . Live broadcasts of legislative proceedings can be seen weekday afternoons on certain local cable stations participating in LaTV, a cooperative effort of the House, the Senate, Louisiana Public Broadcasting and the Louisiana Cable Television Association.

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