



**Louisiana Women's Policy and
Research Commission
2014 Report to the Governor**

**LOUISIANA WOMEN’S POLICY & RESEARCH COMMISSION
2014 REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR**

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The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission hereby submits to Governor Jindal for his consideration this detailed annual report for 2014, required by R.S. 2003 ACT No. 668, which addresses the issues set forth as the duties of this Commission:

Commission Duties

- To monitor the status of Louisiana women for the purpose of evaluating their economic, educational, and health concerns, needs and/or hardships
- To identify and analyze trends that impact the health and prosperity of Louisiana women
- To advise the Governor on particular hardships, concerns, and needs that challenge Louisiana women and their possible solutions

The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission is comprised of members appointed by the Governor to serve during the Governor's term of office. Members are selected from state agencies, the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus, and academic or professional areas including law, education, health, and social sciences to represent the racial, ethnic, regional, religious, socioeconomic, and political diversity of women in the state.

2014 Commission Members

- **Laura Badeaux, Chair, Louisiana Center for Women in Government and Business, Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, LA**
- **Representative Regina Ashford-Barrow, LA State House of Representatives, District 29, member of the Legislative Women's Caucus**
- **Nancy Beben, Designee of the Louisiana Department of Education, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Tonya Bolden-Ball, appointed by the Governor, expertise in social sciences or social work and violence against women, Lafayette, LA**
- **Martha Bryant, appointed by the Governor, expertise in education, Lafayette, LA**
- **Representative Simone B. Champagne, appointed by the Governor, expertise in gender studies, LA State House of Representatives, District 49**
- **Alexis Ducorbier, appointed by the Governor, expertise in business and industry, Hammond, LA**
- **Pamela Egan, appointed by the Governor, expertise in public health and education, Covington, LA**
- **Cordelia Heaney, Executive Director, Office on Women's Policy, Department of Children and Family Services, New Orleans, LA**
- **Racheal Hebert, appointed by the Governor, expertise in violence against women, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Melissa Horton, Designee of the Secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Conshonda Houston-Dotie, appointed by the Governor, expertise in youth organizations for girls, Shreveport, LA**
- **Stephanie LeGrange, Designee of the Louisiana Department of Economic Development, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Michelle A. Massé, Designee of the Louisiana Board of Regents, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Claudeidra Minor, Designee of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Sue McNabb, appointed by the Governor, expertise in law and social science, Clinton, LA**
- **Kathleen Mix, appointed by the Governor, expertise in women's organizations, Metairie, LA**
- **Christie Smith, Executive Director of the Children's Cabinet and State Interagency Coordinating Council, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Representative Patricia Haynes Smith, LA State House of Representatives, District 67, member of the Legislative Women's Caucus**
- **Representative Karen St. Germain, LA State House of Representatives, District 60, Chair of the Legislative Women's Caucus**
- **Elizabeth Dent Sumrall, appointed by the Governor, expertise in business and industry, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Heather Rademacher Taylor, Designee of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Sarah Turner, appointed by the Governor, expertise in education, Baton Rouge, LA**

Executive Summary: Louisiana Women’s Policy & Research Commission 2014 Report to the Governor

2014 was an important year for legislation addressing women’s issues. Bills providing greater protections for victims of stalking, domestic violence, and human trafficking became law, and new education initiatives to train more Louisianans for high-demand jobs were launched, with the potential to help address Louisiana’s ranking as having the largest gender wage gap in the country. This year’s Commission report focuses on key health, safety, economic and education issues facing Louisiana women. The following are highlights from the 2014 Commission report and a compilation of the topics covered by the Commission’s policy recommendations.

Women’s Health

The high rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are of serious concern in Louisiana. Louisiana has the 7th highest rate of teen pregnancies in the nation; Appendix I, “Louisiana Teen Birth Statistics,” lists the number and rate of teen births for each Louisiana parish. The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals has instituted programs like the Bureau of Family Health’s Family Planning - Teen Pregnancy Prevention Teen Outreach Program and the Birth Outcomes Initiative to combat teen pregnancy and the poor birth outcomes associated with it.

Our state consistently ranks at the top for its high rate of STIs. One way to make a difference is to decrease the spread of the human papillomavirus (HPV) among young people, which now affects one out of two sexually active American adults.

Increasing women’s access to preventative medical and dental care are also important health concerns in our state. As of 2013, over 45 million Americans live in “health professional shortage areas” (HPSAs), or “dental deserts,” where the supply of dentists cannot fully meet the needs of the local population. In Louisiana, slightly less than a quarter of the population experiences dental services shortages.¹ In 2013 the state ranked 6th highest in the nation for obesity, with 33.1% of our population considered obese. Obesity is linked to serious chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

Recommendations:

- ***Develop state-wide communication efforts to reassure parents about the safety of HPV vaccines and help them see the benefits of vaccination for their children, increase the variety of providers and locations that offer HPV vaccines, and identify funds to remove the cost factors that could be acting as a barrier to parents having their children vaccinated.***
- ***Create a study group to identify policies and programs to increase the number of dentists offering services to poor and rural communities in Louisiana.***

Gender-Based Violence

The Commission was pleased that a bill based on a recommendation from its 2013 report became law this year: Act 355, the Protection From Stalking Act. As well as reviewing new domestic violence and human trafficking-related legislation that passed in 2014, the Commission has focused on concerns around state-wide sexual assault policies and ways to better protect victims of gender-based violence in this year’s report.

Recommendations:

- ***Develop solutions to ensure that sexual assault victims are never billed for sexual assault forensic medical exams, whether or not the victim reports to law enforcement.***
- ***Require that all state public colleges and universities have a sexual violence policy that is based on a set of policy recommendations established by the Board of Regents.***
- ***Collect data on the number of dual arrests in domestic violence cases reported to service providers to determine if it is necessary to set benchmarks or institute new policies to decrease the rate of domestic violence-related dual arrests state-wide.***
- ***Offer more legal trainings for victim advocates, similar to the trainings they offer for attorneys, judges, and law enforcement officers on state and federal laws and legal policies as they relate to gender-based violence.***
- ***Require annual training for all law enforcement personnel in modules addressing sexual assault, specifically Louisiana's Peace Officer Standards and Training Council's three in-service training modules currently in development. The commission also recommends that sexual assault response training be added to the basic cadet curriculum.***
- ***Re-establish a state sexual assault task force.***

Women's Education

This year Governor Jindal and the state legislature instituted two exciting new initiatives to prepare more high school and college-aged students for careers in high-demand, higher-paying fields: the Jump Start and WISE programs. Because these fields tend to be male-dominated, and a central cause of the gender wage gap is industry gender segregation, it is essential that female-oriented recruitment and mentorship efforts be included in these initiatives. A focus on female recruitment can significantly increase the numbers of women in these fields, where they can earn a living wage for themselves and their families.

The high cost of attaining a college degree is also of particular concern to women. Nationally, 53% of women versus 39% of men have loan payments that are considered to be higher than they can reasonably afford.ⁱⁱ Female undergraduate students are also more likely to have primary responsibility as single parents, thus increasing financial need and financial debt.ⁱⁱⁱ Ensuring that parents and students alike fully understand the real cost of any student loans they elect to take out can help protect women from significant financial hardship in the future.

Recommendations:

- ***Initiate female-oriented recruitment efforts for the Jump Start program's career pathways, and establish ways to ensure that female students are well-represented in all the career pathways offered to students.***
- ***All college and university WISE Fund recipients should be encouraged to develop women's recruitment and retention activities for their programs, and programs should track and report annually on their efforts to recruit women to their targeted degree programs.***
- ***The Louisiana Department of Education should continue to work to incorporate the topic of student loans into its financial literacy curriculum for students. Additionally, the Com-***

mission recommends that the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance create a financial literacy webinar for all incoming post-secondary education student. Parents of these students should also be encouraged to view the student loan webinar.

Economic & Employment Issues

Louisiana has the largest gender wage gap in the country, with women earning only \$.66 on average to every \$1 earned by a man.^{iv} The causes of the gender wage gap include women being over-represented in lower-paying industries like education and healthcare, the higher-than-average number of Louisiana female minimum-wage workers (70% of minimum-wage workers in Louisiana are women), and the child and elder-care responsibilities many women have.

One way to shrink the gender wage gap in Louisiana is to help more women start their own businesses. From 2005 to 2010, the percentage of people working for themselves increased from 28% to 40% of all workers, and women-owned businesses have grown at one and a half times the rate other small businesses over the last 15 years. However, even though women have a major impact on the state's economy, Louisiana ranks 47th lowest in the nation for the number of women who are self-employed.

Another way to positively impact the gender wage gap in Louisiana is to make accessing quality childcare more affordable for working mothers. Currently the salary level parents may earn to access the subsidies from the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) remains at \$2,160 for a two-person household,^v and the number of children served by the program has decreased as fewer households are eligible for the program.^{vi}

Recommendations:

- ***That the Louisiana State Legislature propose legislation to create a permanent state Equal Pay Commission.***
- ***That BESE develop an early learning funding model that reforms the Child Care Assistance Program's (CCAP) funding formula within current dollars to ensure that the allocation to families is adequate, fair, and sufficiently covers the cost of child care.***
- ***The state's 34 regional chambers of commerce should work collectively to establish a women's council for every chamber, and that they explore creating outreach initiatives that specifically market chamber events to women.***

Trends: Women's Leadership

Governor Jindal has appointed women to many key positions within state government, including five female cabinet secretaries. However, the number of women serving Louisiana in elected office has been declining over the last seven years, and women make up only 12% of Louisiana's house and senate members, the lowest percentage of women in any statehouse in the country. Appendix III, "Louisiana Women's Leadership," provides data on the gender distribution of elected Louisiana officials.

Recommendations:

- ***Institute a system, available online to the public, which provides a list of board and commission vacancies so that women interested in serving on a state board or commission can more easily identify available opportunities to serve.***

Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission 2014 Report to the Governor

I. Monitoring the Status of Louisiana Women

In 2014, the Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission saw results. Several of the policy recommendations outlined in the Commission's 2013 Report to the Governor became bills proposed during this year's state legislative session. The Commission's work this year resulted in the implementation of new gender-neutral job training at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, a new initiative for 2015 to develop and implement a screening and training program for sexual violence for clinicians and clerks through the Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health, and a new state law: Act 355, the Protection From Stalking Act.

As the Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission looks to the year ahead, we are pleased to see so much momentum at a state-wide level around women's issues, especially in regard to gender-based violence. New state health initiatives focusing on chronic disease and prevention, and new educational initiatives focused on increasing the number of high school and college students going into high-wage, high-demand jobs also have the potential to help make positive changes in the lives of women in Louisiana. However, it is essential that care is paid to how newly launched state initiatives are marketed to women, and that we work to ensure that these initiatives make a difference in the lives of Louisiana women and girls.

A. Women's Health

Health is an essential factor in the quality of our daily lives. It affects our ability to be productive and to achieve our goals. Issues that affect citizens of our state as a whole, like our state's high rates of obesity, chronic disease, teen births and sexually transmitted diseases, are of critical importance to women. Likewise, women face challenges in accessing preventive health and mental health services, which are a concern for all. The cost to our state for not addressing these issues can be high, both in terms of economic productivity and overall quality of life.

i. Reproductive Health and Sexually Transmitted Infections

Of the 50 states, Louisiana ranks 3rd highest in chlamydia case rates,^{vii} 2nd in gonorrhea case rates,^{viii} and 4th in primary and secondary syphilis case rates.^{ix} Louisiana ranks 6th highest in national AIDS rates.^x The high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are of particular concern to the Women's Policy & Research Commission, since women suffer more frequent and more serious complications from STIs than men. Also, the transmission of STIs can be a warning sign that those infected are not practicing safer sex and are at increased risk of becoming infected with other STIs or HIV, may be at risk for an unintended pregnancy, and if pregnant may be at risk for transmitting the STI to the fetus.

The human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States; it is estimated that 50% of sexually active men and women will get at least one of the 150 strains of HPV at some point in their lives. While most HPV infections resolve on their own, there are over 40 strains of HPV that can cause cancer. HPV is related to almost 100% of cervical cancer cases, as well as being the cause of genital warts and anal, oral, vaginal, penile, and vulvar cancers.^{xi} Currently there are two HPV vaccines available in the U.S.; vaccinations are generally recommended for pre-teens aged 11 or 12, or teens between the ages of 13 and 17. However, despite the prevalence of HPV and the preventable

nature of the infection through vaccines, nationally only 57.3% of girls and 34.6% of boys aged 13 to 17 had received at least one dose of an HPV vaccine in 2013.^{xii}

Act 210, passed during the 2008 Louisiana Regular Legislative Session, states that the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals is responsible for developing and providing information on HPV and vaccination resources to the state Department of Education, and that “each city, parish, and other local public school board that provides information relative to immunizations shall provide to the parent or legal guardian of each student in grades six through twelve information relative to the risks associated with human papillomavirus and the availability, effectiveness, and known contraindications of immunization against human papillomavirus. The information shall describe the link between human papillomavirus and cervical cancer, the means by which human papillomavirus is spread, and where a person may be immunized against human papillomavirus. The information shall be updated annually if new information on human papillomavirus becomes available.” However, as of 2013 only 59.8% of teen girls and 27% of teen boys in Louisiana have been vaccinated at least once.^{xiii} More needs to be done to encourage parents to have their teens vaccinated to prevent HPV infection later in life, and the deadly forms of cancer that can result from HPV.

ii. Teen Pregnancy

Since 2009, Louisiana has reduced its teen pregnancy rates from 51.6 per 1,000 teen girls to 39 per 1,000 teen girls (age 15-19), a reduction of over 24%.^{xiv} However, Louisiana’s rates remain higher than the national average of 29.4 births per 1,000 teen girls (age 15-19).^{xv} In 2013, the teen birth rate for 15-19 year olds in Louisiana was 39 births per 1,000 Louisiana resident girls, ages 15-19.^{xvi} Louisiana ranked as the state with the 7th highest rate in teen pregnancies in 2012.^{xvii} Furthermore, in 2013 birth rates for teen girls in 16 of the 64 Louisiana parishes were more than double the national average.^{xviii} Appendix I, “Teen Birth Statistics,” lists 2013 teen birth rates for all Louisiana parishes. According to the 2014 Sexual Health Education Task Force established by HCR 90, unplanned pregnancies can be costly for states. The cost of teen births is both a short-term and long-term economic issue, because babies born to teen mothers are at higher risk of pre-term delivery and low birth weight. In addition, babies born with low birth weight are more likely to suffer from certain adverse health outcomes later in life, including diabetes and high blood pressure. Between 2009 and 2011, approximately 17% of Louisiana babies born to youth aged 13-19 were considered low birth weight (< 2500g).^{xix}

Decreasing teen pregnancy is a goal for many state offices, including the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) and the Office of Louisiana Youth for Excellence, as well as for non-profits across the state. DHH’s Office of Public Health (OPH) has several teen pregnancy programs. The Bureau of Family Health’s “Family Planning - Teen Pregnancy Prevention Teen Outreach Program” (TOP) is a nine-month long program that will be implemented in community-based settings in parishes selected among those that have the highest rates of teen births. TOP utilizes a tested framework for creating and/or enhancing youth development efforts that empower teens to lead successful lives and build strong communities, and is one of only a few programs that is proven effective in increasing school success and preventing teen pregnancy. Seven agencies are currently contracted with DHH to implement the TOP program in different areas of Louisiana, and 3,125 youths have enrolled since the program began in 2011. The Bureau of Family Health also manages the state’s Family Planning

Program, which offers clinical services in 69 service sites state-wide. In 2012, these centers served 487 men and 35,203 women; overall 6,819 patients were under the age of 19. In addition, OPH's STD/HIV program includes the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP), instituted by its seven contracted agencies, and uses two program models, Project AIM and Sisters Informing, Healing, Living and Empowering (SIHLE). Project AIM is a group-level intervention for youth ages 11-14 that encourages young people to envision a positive possible future and discuss risk behaviors that could be a barrier to successful adulthood. This intervention is designed to reduce HIV, STD and pregnancy risk behavior among youth. The Baton Rouge Black Alcoholism Council/Metro Health Education is implementing Project AIM in the Baton Rouge metro area. Sisters Informing, Healing, Living and Empowering (SIHLE) is a group level, peer-led, social skills training intervention aimed at reducing HIV risk behavior among African American teenage females, ages 14-18. SIHLE emphasizes ethnic and gender pride, healthy relationships, assertive communication, and enhances awareness of HIV risk reduction strategies. Six organizations are currently implementing the SIHLE program state-wide: the Greater Baton Rouge YWCA, Acadiana Cares in Lafayette, SWLA Center for Health Services in Lake Charles, Louisiana Prevention Training Center/Baton Rouge AIDS Society in Alexandria, The Philadelphia Center in Shreveport, and Face to Face Enrichment Center in Hammond. In the coming year, the Village Resource Center of Napoleonville will begin implementing the SIHLE program as well.

Improving teen pregnancy rates in Louisiana also augments the efforts of Louisiana's Birth Outcomes Initiative, another DHH effort to improve health outcomes for mothers and their babies. A key focus in the Initiative has been to improve birth weights by targeting the factors that affect these weights. The department has improved maternal education and support through Initiative partnerships with the Best Babies Zone Initiative and Healthy Start. Also, the department has partnered with hospitals and insurers to discourage elective early deliveries. In September of this year, for example, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana and Louisiana Medicaid announced jointly that they would no longer cover these procedures. The Initiative has also sought to improve neonatal outcomes through hospital outreach and training and reduction of factors contributing to NICU stays. Further reducing teen pregnancy rates will have the added benefit of improving each of the factors listed above, from birth weights to pre-term delivery to increased neonatal care. Teen pregnancy is both a driver of the elements associated with these poor outcomes, e.g. poor prenatal care and inadequate weight gain during pregnancy, and also an independent driver of poor birth outcomes.^{xx}

iii. Dental Health

Oral health is important to our overall health, because our mouths are home to a great deal of bacteria. Without proper oral hygiene and regular dental care, infections can occur that go beyond our mouths to other parts of our bodies.^{xxi} For example, heart disease and stroke are linked to inflammation and infections that can be caused by oral bacteria, and premature birth and low birth weight have been linked to periodontitis.^{xxii} As residents of a rural state, Louisiana women face unique challenges in accessing dental care. As of 2013, over 45 million Americans live in "health professional shortage areas" (HPSAs), or "dental deserts," where the supply of dentists cannot fully meet the needs of the local population. In Louisiana, slightly less than a quarter of the population experiences dental services shortages.^{xxiii}

Although the number of people graduating with dentistry degrees is increasing nationally, many of these individuals establish practices in communities where there are larger proportions of paying customers. Because of this, dental deserts (HPSAs) are especially common in rural communities and in poorer communities where patients utilize Medicaid, which generally has lower payout rates for dentists.^{xxiv} States are allowed to set the rate of Medicaid coverage for dental procedures, and the reimbursement amounts can vary widely between states; Louisiana should focus on recruiting dentists into HPSA communities. The recent contract between the state and MCNA to manage Louisiana's Medicaid dental benefits program is an important first step. Since July 1, 2014, MCNA has coordinated access to dental care for 1.2 million Medicaid and LaCHIP enrollees. In addition to its general expertise in the field, MCNA is required to maintain a provider network that is adequate to provide access to the eligible population regardless of location. In constructing additional strategies, policy makers should examine ways to increase the number of dentists graduating from state schools of dentistry, as well as examining strategies for encouraging dentists to provide care in rural settings. The Louisiana State Loan Repayment Program currently provides up to \$90,000 in loan repayment for dentists and up to \$45,000 for hygienists who commit to working 3 years in an HPSA. The benefits of this program can already be seen in Louisiana's high percentage of need met within its HPSAs – Louisiana meets 62% of its need within its shortage areas, performing 41% better than the national average. Further improvements to the program may drive up access in HPSAs even more. Finally, the state should consider changing dentist-hygienist oversight requirements in HPSAs. If hygienists are permitted to practice with indirect supervision from a dentist in these regions, both hygienists and dentists may be encouraged to provide broader geographical coverage without requiring a substantial investment of state funds. This could also be achieved by utilizing mobile prevention units.

iv. Obesity & Chronic Disease

Louisiana ranked 6th highest in the nation for obesity in 2013, with 33.1% of our population considered obese.^{xxv} However, it is important to note that this is a substantial improvement from the previous year, where Louisiana was ranked the most obese state in the nation with a rate of 34.7%.^{xxvi} Obesity can be caused by poor diet and a lack of regular exercise, and some studies also attribute obesity to other factors such as water pollution, the effect of insecticides/pesticides and genetically modified foods on our bodies, and exposure to chemicals present in the plastics used in some food packaging. Obesity is linked to serious chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.^{xxvii}

Chronic disease cost Louisiana a total of \$4.5 billion in 2003. Additionally, the economic loss caused by sick days and reduced productivity was \$17.4 billion alone in Louisiana in the same time period. Adjusted for inflation, the total cost of treatment, and the economic and productivity cost to Louisiana drained an estimated \$28 billion from the nation's economy in 2013. If we made smarter choices together to improve our wellbeing, the Milken Institute predicted that we could avoid 612,000 cases of chronic conditions in 10 years. We could also reduce future economic costs by more than \$17 billion in 2023 and we could increase Louisiana's economic output by \$62 billion by 2050.^{xxviii}

This year, Louisiana's Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) launched the Well-Ahead Louisiana program. Well-Ahead Louisiana is a campaign started by DHH aimed at

improving the health and wellness of Louisiana citizens. Well-Ahead Louisiana promotes and recognizes smart choices, in the spaces and places where Louisiana residents spend most of their time, that make it easier for us all to live healthier lives, from going tobacco-free to ensuring healthy lunch options or supporting workplace fitness programs. Well-Ahead is a campaign that promotes voluntary changes without creating new rules or taxes.^{xxix}

Part of the Well-Ahead Louisiana campaign is the designation of places and spaces committed to making choices and changes to make it easier for Louisiana citizens to live well. Once designated, these environments are called WellSpots. WellSpots have demonstrated to the Health Promotion Team that they are committed to improving wellness outcomes. Places and organizations that meet certain criteria and have completed key benchmarks, verified by DHH staff, can be designated as a Level 1, 2, or 3 WellSpot, with Level 1 as the highest level of designation. DHH staff will work closely with restaurants, schools, worksites, local governments, childcare centers, hospitals, and universities and colleges to help them identify and meet benchmarks for wellness, like being tobacco-free or breastfeeding friendly.

Being designated a WellSpot does not require that a fee be paid to DHH, and many changes may be free to implement, such as a tobacco-free policy. Other changes may come at a cost to the organization, business or school, but DHH believes those costs are greatly offset by the opportunity to improve the health and well-being of Louisiana citizens. Well-Ahead has also developed a strong Network of Partners at all levels, which allows for DHH staff to connect with partners and for citizens to connect with those resources in their area that can help them achieve their health and wellness goals. DHH provides lists of resources and partners to assist with making healthy choices on the Well-Ahead website (www.WellAheadLA.com).

B. Gender-Based Violence

Efforts to combat gender-based violence in Louisiana were center stage during the 2014 Legislative Session. Multiple new bills were proposed to address domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking. Several gender-based violence-related recommendations from the Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission's 2013 Report to the Governor were proposed as bills, and one (HB 1122 by Rep. Patricia Haynes Smith), became law: the Protection From Stalking Act.

Additionally, previous recommendations from the Commission that more gender-based violence training be made available to professionals that routinely interact with current and potential victims have resulted in the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health (OPH), Bureau of Family Health proposing a new initiative for 2015 to develop and implement a screening and training program for sexual violence for OPH clinicians and clerks. The Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault (LaFASA) and its thirteen member sexual assault crisis centers will provide the Bureau of Family Health with technical assistance to help OPH develop screening questions and referral pathways for OPH reproductive health patients facing domestic violence and human trafficking situations or families struggling with an issue that would require mandatory reporting. LaFASA will also offer nine regional trainings for OPH clerks and clinicians on gender-based violence awareness, screening and referral. The trainings will bring together providers and experts on gender-based violence prevention from each region, with the goal of building local capacities and partnerships between agencies that

provide victims with services and the development of regional resource guides.

While significant progress was made in combating gender-based violence in Louisiana this year, much more still needs to be done. The prevalence and persistence of gender-based violence in Louisiana highlights the continued need for creative and collaborative efforts to engage all community stakeholders in the fight against gender-based violence.

i. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a persistent public health and criminal justice concern in Louisiana. In the most recent review of female homicides by male perpetrators (the statistic generally used to track domestic violence-related homicides), Louisiana ranked 4th highest in the nation in 2012, with 45 murders, or 1.92 per 100,000 people in the state.^{xxx} This is up from ranking 9th the previous year, with 39 female homicides.^{xxxi} This compares with a national average rate of 1.16 homicides per 100,000. While state agencies and domestic violence service providers work hard to provide services and legal support to victims of domestic violence, there remains a need for new policies and further resources, particularly to address the law enforcement practice of dual arrests and the availability of victim advocates to assist victims as they navigate the legal system.

Many new laws were passed this year, with the goal of providing further protections for victims, punishing abusers, and offering further prevention and education activities within the community. Some of the new laws include:

- ACT 194 - Adds domestic abuse battery and domestic abuse aggravated assault to the list of crimes of violence, amends penalty provisions of domestic abuse battery for people placed on probation and for those receiving a second conviction for domestic abuse battery, designates an act of violence against a family member as “domestic abuse,” and prohibits the release on a person’s own recognizance after an arrest for certain offenses related to domestic violence.
- ACT 195 - (The Susan “Pixie” Gouaux Act); prohibits the possession of a firearm by people convicted of domestic abuse battery. Requires law enforcement officers to seize firearms at the scene of an act of domestic violence if they believe there could be impending danger. Prohibits the possession of a firearm by any person against whom the court has issued a protective order relative to domestic abuse, for the duration of the order.
- ACT 315 - Authorizes exemplary damages in certain lawsuits arising from domestic abuse, regardless of whether the defendant was prosecuted for his or her acts.
- ACT 316 - Eliminates the waiting period for divorce when domestic abuse is proven.
- ACT 317 - Requires the judges who prepare Uniform Abuse Prevention Orders to also forward the order to the Louisiana Supreme Court and the chief law enforcement official of the parish where the person protected by the order resides, and expedites the process. Increases the penalties for violation of a protective order if the violation involves battery against the protected person. Provides that law enforcement officers shall immediately arrest a person in violation of a protective order. Requires law enforcement officers to presume that the predominant aggressor of a domestic dispute is the person against

whom a protective order was filed.

- Act 318 - (“Gwen’s Law”); provides that if the court determines that a defendant poses a threat, the court may order the defendant held without bail pending trial, or may require the defendant to wear an electronic monitoring device as a condition of bail and can also prohibit the defendant from possessing a firearm for the duration of the Uniform Abuse Prevention Order.
- Act 333 - Creates specific requirements for batterer treatment programs. Stipulates that these programs must be at least 26 weeks long, in person, that facilitators must have specific training, and must use specific curriculum designed for domestic violence perpetrators.
- Act 506 - Requires that all school employees working with grades 7-12 receive training at the beginning of each school year on the definition of dating violence, dating violence warning signs, and how to properly address suspected or reported dating violence involving students, including but not limited to counseling and notification of law enforcement, and provide information relative to dating violence to the parents of students in such grades. Schools are now required to include dating violence in the student code of conduct, collect data and make a report to the school board on compliance and progress.
- Act 634 - Excludes domestic armed battery, rape, stalking, human trafficking, and other violent offenses from the list of crimes for which a minimum sentence can be waived.
- Act 663 - Creates a state-wide Domestic Violence Prevention Commission.
- Act 787 - Increases access to child care assistance for homeless families, which can benefit victims of domestic violence that need to leave their home to avoid abuse. Homeless families get a grace period during which childcare can start while they wait for birth certificates and immunization records. Waives work and school requirements for homeless families seeking work or in transitional housing for 90-180 days.

The Louisiana Women’s Policy & Research Commissions applauds the efforts of the many legislators and community advocates who worked tirelessly to bring these new pieces of legislation to fruition with the support of the Jindal administration, and looks forward to working closely with the new state Domestic Violence Prevention Commission to ensure that the state improves its ability to serve and protect survivors of domestic violence.

ii. Stalking

Nationally, 1 in 9 women and 1 in 16 men are stalked every year. 28.1% of stalking victims were victimized by current or former intimate partners/spouses, and 41.8% by non-intimate people they knew (a relative, friend/roommate, person known from work or school, acquaintance). 9% of stalkers were identified but were strangers to the victim, and the remaining 21% were unidentified or the victim could not identify a single offender.^{xxxii} Two notable laws were passed this legislative session to address stalking:

- Act 522 - Adds stalking a minor to the list of offenses for which an offender can be made to register.

- Act 355 - Provides for the Protection From Stalking Act; includes non-intimate partner victims in the stalking definition and provides them with access to civil protective orders that will now be included in the Louisiana Protective Order Registry. This law, authored by Representative Patricia Haynes Smith, was based on a recommendation in the 2013 Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission Report. The report noted that legislation passed in 2012 required criminal orders of protection in stalking cases to be entered into the Louisiana Protective Order Registry, regardless of the relationship of the stalker to the victim; however, there remained a gap in the law that did not allow civil orders of protection to be entered into the Louisiana Protective Order Registry when the stalker and victim do not have a former or current domestic or dating relationship.

iii. Human Trafficking

Combating human trafficking (a term commonly used to refer to sex trafficking) was a central part of Governor Jindal's legislative agenda this year. This year's state budget included an additional \$250,000 for the development and implementation of a human trafficking training course to help law enforcement better understand the signs of human trafficking, and to help officers learn how to combat these criminal activities as they patrol our streets and communities. In addition, a host of laws were proposed by the Jindal administration and passed by the legislature to crack down on perpetrators and provide additional services for victims, with particular focus on assisting child victims of human trafficking. Some of the highlights include:

- Act 554 - Permits the creation of human trafficking courts and provides for training for the presiding judges.
- Act 564 - Creates harsher punishments and better tools for cracking down on human trafficking and commercial sex related offenses.
- Act 565- Requires posting of the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline in outpatient abortion facilities.
- Act 569 – Requires that information, including information regarding resources and services for human trafficking victims, be conveyed to a woman prior to an abortion.

As part of Act 564, the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) was charged with offering services to adult and child human trafficking victims and collecting data on the services victims receive. DCFS will develop an Annual Statistical Report on Human Sexual Trafficking in Louisiana for the legislature that will track the services offered, geographic areas served, number of individuals served, and individual status updates on each person served by each safe house operating under a contract with the department to provide services to sexually exploited children and/or adults, while maintaining the confidentiality of the individuals served. DCFS will also develop a data tracking mechanism to record the number of trafficking cases called into the department, and for foster youth identified as possible trafficking victims.

As a result of this year's new anti-trafficking legislation, Louisiana is now ranked first in the nation by Shared Hope International for our anti-trafficking efforts as they relate to minors. "The Protected Innocence Challenge," Shared Hope's annual report card, graded states on

41 key legislative components: criminalization of domestic minor sex trafficking, criminal justice tools for investigation and prosecution, criminal provisions addressing demand, and criminal provisions for traffickers and facilitators. Louisiana received a score of 96, the highest in the country.^{xxxiii} In addition, Louisiana was ranked as a Tier 1 state for the third year in a row for its efforts to strengthen penalties for human traffickers and protect victims by the national non-profit Polaris.^{xxxiv}

iv. Sexual Assault

Sexual assault awareness and education, sexual assaults on college campuses, and concerns over some sexual assault victims receiving hundreds or even thousands of dollars in hospital bills for components of their ER visits for sexual assault forensic exams were at the forefront of gender-based violence-related policy discussions this year. Several laws were passed this session to address sexual assault awareness and prevention, and Governor Jindal issued two executive orders, Executive Order BJ 2014 – 14 and Executive Order BJ 2014 – 17, to address specific sexual assault-related policy issues.

Executive Order BJ 2014 – 14 serves to protect victims of sexual assault in the state by requesting that the Board of Regents work to help coordinate the creation of uniform policies and best practices among the public postsecondary education institutions to address the reporting of sexual assault on their campuses, and by directing the Crime Victims Reparations Board to immediately revise administrative rules, policies and practices under R.S. 46: 1809, used to determine victims’ eligibility for reparations, which had previously taken into account prior behavior of the victim at the time of the crime and potentially implied that victims were in some way responsible for having been victims.

Executive Order BJ 2014 – 17 requires the Crime Victims Reparations Board, in consultation with the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, to review and revise its administrative rules, policies, and practices to develop a defined list of eligible medical expenses related to the forensic medical examination provided to victims of sexual assault that would be covered for funds administered by the Board. It extends the time limit for a victim to report an act of sexual assault to the appropriate law enforcement officers from 72 hours to 1 year in order to make a claim for reparations; asks the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and the Louisiana Department of Public Safety to formulate a definition for “Forensic Medical Exam” that includes emergency room charges, hospital stay charges, and physician charges in that definition to ensure that those expenses are not chargeable to the sexual assault victim; requires the Department of Health and Hospitals, through the medical directors of each of its nine regional Health Service Districts, to coordinate a sexual assault response plan for each district by February 1, 2015; and requires the Department of Health and Hospitals and the Department of Public Safety to convene a group to formulate the minimum standards for the contents of a sexual assault examination kit, including the accompanying paperwork to be included, with the intent of creating a kit that is shelf stable and has no expiration date.

1. 2014 Legislation

Several bills were passed this legislative session to address sexual assault crimes, with a focus on increasing awareness and prevention in public schools and improving the

effectiveness of the Sex Offender Registry:

- Act 631 – Requires that for the 2014-15 budget year, a portion of funds be allocated to the Office of the Attorney General to assist and monitor sheriff participation in utilization of the computer system, the administration of the sex offender and child predator registration and notification laws, and the cost of maintenance of the computer system of the sheriffs of the parishes for registration of sex offenders and child predators.
- Act 190 – Adds more specific descriptors to further define the crime of failure to register as a sex offender or child predator.
- Act 525 – (“Erin’s Law”); requires instruction on child assault awareness and prevention in public schools. The governing authority of each public elementary and secondary school is now required to provide age- and grade-appropriate classroom instruction to all students relative to child assault awareness and prevention. This instruction shall be limited to education on what constitutes abuse or an assault, and how students may safely and confidentially report to a school official the circumstances surrounding any such abuse or assaults. It should be integrated into the curriculum of an existing required course, such as health education, physical education, or another required course deemed appropriate by the school governing authority.

2. Louisiana Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits

Act 124, which was also signed during this year’s legislative session, requires that by January 1, 2015, all criminal justice agencies charged with the maintenance, storage, and preservation of sexual assault collection kits (known as “rape kits”) conduct a physical inventory of all such kits being stored by the agency and compile, in writing, a report to the director of the Louisiana State Police Crime Laboratory that contains the number of untested sexual assault collection kits in the possession of the agency as well as the date the sexual assault kit was collected. Each criminal justice agency is also expected to provide written notification if it does not have any untested sexual assault collection kits in its possession. By March 1, 2015, the Louisiana State Police Crime Lab is then required to prepare and transmit a report to the chairman of the Senate Committee on Judiciary B and the chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Judiciary with the number of untested sexual assault collection kits being stored by each parish, by each criminal justice agency, and the date the untested kit was collected; this report must also include the name and contact information for any criminal justice agency that failed to submit the report required on January 1, 2015 to the lab.

The Louisiana State Police Crime Laboratory has implemented a number of measures over the past few years to increase turn-around speeds and efficiency. After obtaining a Lean Six Sigma efficiency grant, they were able to greatly enhance their work flows, streamline processes and implement a teamwork approach for their analyses. These changes to their case work approach, coupled with outreach training, and implementation of specific evidence related policy changes has led to a mere 15 day turnaround time for DNA cases and a zero backlog for sexual assault cases that are submitted to the Louisiana State Police crime laboratory. LSP continues to assess the number of untested kits that are being held by local level law enforcement entities throughout the state and works

with these entities to help develop a plan of action to address local level issues moving forward.

3. Sexual Assault Forensic Exams and Executive Order BJ 2014-17

In the fall of 2014, the issue of sexual assault forensic exam billing gained national media attention. State legislators, along with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH), the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE), and Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault (LaFASA) began discussion on sexual assault response in the state, gaps, and potential improvements.

Under the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) regulations, no victim of sexual assault is to be charged for evidence collection, regardless of whether or not they report to law enforcement. Louisiana law tasks the city-parish government with covering the cost of forensic medical examinations for rape victims. In many areas of our state, the burden of this cost is put on the individual hospitals, some of which are charging sexual assault victims for some or all of the costs of the exam. Recognizing the urgent need to further protect sexual assault victims from being re-victimized, Governor Jindal issued Executive Order BJ 2014-17 *Medical Expenses and Examinations Related to the Crime of Sexual Assault* ensuring that the Crime Reparations Board, in consultation with the Commission on Law Enforcement, will revise its administrative rules, policies, and practices so that victims will not be burdened with the cost of forensic medical exams related to sexual assault.

4. Sexual Assault on College Campuses

Sexual assault has been covered extensively by the media this year, especially sexual assault occurring on college campuses. All public and private colleges and universities that receive federal funds must comply with Title IX, which prohibits discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment and assault, and the Clery Act, which requires that schools report campus crime statistics to the U.S. Department of Education, including the number of sexual assaults on campus. Nationally, approximately 1 in 5 undergraduate women has been the victim of attempted or completed sexual assault while in college, and less than 5% of rape victims attending college report their attack to law enforcement.^{xxxv} Because of the high rate of incidences of sexual assaults on college campuses and the need to enable universities to effectively provide services and policies that can ensure victims' safety on campus and allow schools to discipline perpetrators, it is essential that Louisiana universities work to ensure that their sexual assault-related policies and procedures follow best practices.

Sexual assault on college campuses poses particular challenges when it comes to representing accurate crime statistics and providing effective support and care to survivors, and a uniform reporting policy is crucial. While the Clery Act requires colleges and universities to disclose crime statistics in order to receive federal funding, in some instances, colleges or universities only count rates of sexual assault on campus if both the victim and the aggressor are current students, and in extreme cases, only if the assault took place on school property. Better practice, followed by some Louisiana universities (including Louisiana State University) reports any on- or off-campus crime involving stu-

dent survivors, which leads to more accurate representation of crimes in annual reports. Since many state campuses are open to the public, especially during football and other sporting events, this may result in other instances of sexual assault between students or non-students that still take place on campus but are not necessarily included in the school's annual crime statistics report. Because there is no uniform policy for addressing sexual assault on Louisiana's college and university campuses, schools currently must outline their own guidelines for assisting survivors in the wake of an assault. A uniform policy would not only help colleges and universities provide more accurate reports on campus crimes but also create a more effective support system for student survivors. Throughout the state, many colleges and universities are only able to provide support to student survivors through on-campus health centers and programs during regular business hours (e.g. Monday through Friday, 8am – 5pm). Because national studies show that campus assaults are more likely to occur in the evening, overnight hours, and on weekends, this year's discussions supported the need for colleges and universities to develop and implement a more effective system for providing "after-hours" care and support to survivors. Not only would this help victims feel more comfortable reporting, but it would also give them guidance in order to take immediate action following the crime, including seeking medical care and/or filing a report with the local police or appropriate college/university offices.

This year, the state legislature's Senate Committee on Judiciary B requested that the Board of Regents, in conjunction with the management boards of the Louisiana State University, Southern University, University of Louisiana, and Louisiana Community and Technical College systems, supply a report detailing 1) the number of sexual assaults that have been reported on each campus for the proceeding five calendar years, 2) the number of sexual assault investigations that have been conducted on each campus for the proceeding five calendar years, 3) the written policy governing sexual assaults on each campus, specifically including any sexual assault response employee training requirements, and 4) the written investigation and adjudication procedures for sexual assault. The report found that Louisiana colleges and universities have disparate policies to address sexual violence on their campuses. Some do not even have policies that address specific instances of sexual violence, and only include sexual harassment. In addition, many universities reported such low numbers of incidents of sexual violence occurring on their campuses over the past five years that it has caused concern that the numbers are not an accurate portrayal of actual acts of sexual violence.

As part of the effort to address the concerns stemming from the Board of Regents report, Senator J.P. Morrell called a Sexual Assault Working Group meeting in October of 2014. The group's membership included representatives from universities, students and victim advocates from across Louisiana. The group proposed several remedies to improve college sexual assault-related policies in Louisiana, including: 1) administering an anonymous climate survey to students at Louisiana universities to allow them to provide information on a wide range of experiences, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, which may not have been formally reported to campus officials or law enforcement; 2) working with the Board of Regents to draft a sample sexual violence policy to serve as a model for Louisiana universities; and 3) developing better ways to collect and report data from the larger communities in which the universities exist to get a more accurate account of sexual violence occurring on college campuses. Expediting

this process, Governor Jindal issued Executive Order 2014-14 *Uniformity of Policies Related to the Crime of Sexual Assault* to direct the Board of Regents to immediately develop policies based on best practices.

C. Women's Education Issues

Access to quality education is essential for women to have healthy and successful lives, and encouraging women to pursue academic achievements in fields like science, technology, engineering, math, and the trade professions, which are traditionally male-dominated while also being high-wage, high-demand jobs in Louisiana, can have a strong impact on decreasing the gender wage gap. This year the state established two new initiatives, JumpStart and the WISE Fund, to help students access quality job training and educational opportunities that will prepare them for these jobs. Nationally, women face challenges in paying for their education, but Louisiana is doing its part by boasting lower debt loads and lower than average tuition rates.

Additionally, many women need access to child care in order to obtain a quality education, and need the support of the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to have a successful academic future. As part of Governor Jindal's Act 3 legislation passed in 2012 to increase kindergarten readiness and the quality of child care centers, CCAP funding, which has historically been funded through the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), beginning July 1, 2015 will be funded through the Department of Education, where there may potentially be opportunities to draw down additional dollars from federal, state, and local sources.

Sexual Health Education in elementary and secondary schools is another important topic for female students in our state. This year the state's Sexual Education Task Force examined sexual health education in Louisiana. Given Louisiana's high teen pregnancy and STI rates, continuing to discuss ways to improve sexual health education is vital.

i. Higher Education & STEM

During the 2013-2014 academic year, Louisiana women earned more advanced degrees than men at every level. Unfortunately, women were still underrepresented for the most part in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). While women earned more degrees than men in some areas of the sciences such as Agricultural Science and Biological/Life Science, they made up only 14.8% of Engineering graduates, by far the most popular STEM degree. Appendix II, "Higher Education & STEM" provides specific data on graduation numbers and degrees earned.

ii. Student Loans

The Higher Education Act of 1965, HEA, was authored by Congress under the leadership of President Lyndon B. Johnson to provide a federal student loan program to students interested in attending college who may not otherwise have the finances available to enroll in a post-secondary institution. The federal student loan program, Title IV, was authorized as part of HEA of 1965. Title IV funds were allocated to institutions of higher education, allowing

colleges the opportunity to enroll students who may have never been able to attend college to do so through the Title IV federal student loan program.

Living the American dream of having a good education, owning a home, buying a car and living comfortably is becoming more of a dream than a reality for millions of young adults in the twenty-first century. The hopes and aspirations of individuals who seek to attain the American dream by going to college is being replaced with the fears and anxiety of an ever-increasing student debt crisis. The student debt crisis is quickly evolving into an education epidemic. Nationally, approximately 37 million people have outstanding student loans, and about 5 million people are at least one payment in arrears.^{xxxvi} The total amount of student debt is approximately 1.2 trillion dollars, second only to home mortgages; student loan debt is growing at a faster rate than credit card debt. Although the debt crisis is critical for all students, women experience a much greater burden. The American Association of University Women's (AAUW) 2012 report provided information on the debt burden experienced by college students, specifically women; nationally, more women than men experience a higher percentage of student loan debt; 53% of women versus 39% of men have above-average loan payments. Female undergraduate students are also more likely to have primary responsibility as single parents, thus increasing financial need and financial debt.^{xxxvii}

The U.S. Department of Education's student loan default rate is designed to measure the percentage of students who default on their student loans during the first two years after they become due. DOE's rate tells us nothing about the number of students who default later in the repayment period.^{xxxviii} Student loan debt has become the second largest consumer debt factor in America. One quarter of borrowers owe more than \$28,000.^{xxxix} The average borrower with federal student loans now carries more than \$26,000 in debt, a nearly 43 percent increase from 2007. In addition, approximately \$52 billion in student loans that were being paid on time fell behind in the first half of 2013; the highest first-half total in New York Federal data dating to 2003.^{xl}

Data indicate that the age of the borrower has a direct impact on the student loan default rate. Although the size of the loan does not predict default, the age of the borrower does. Younger borrowers are at far greater risk of default and delinquency. Among those under twenty-one, twenty-eight percent have defaulted on their loans. This drops to eighteen percent of borrowers between the ages of thirty and forty-four and twelve percent of those forty-five and older (That those forty-five and older are still repaying student debt is itself a fact worth noting).^{xli} It is estimated that \$580 billion of the \$870 billion owed is owed by those younger than forty years of age.^{xlii} The federal government disbursed \$6.2 billion in 1982, the equivalent of \$13.6 billion in 2012 dollars. Thirty years later, in 2012, federal student loan disbursements totaled \$105 billion, more than seven times their 1982 levels after adjusting for inflation.

Women contribute to a larger portion of the debt crisis primarily due to the gender pay gap. When women and men enter the workforce after graduation the student loan payment is nearly equal. According to AAUW, the median monthly student loan payment for men and women one year after graduation is approximately \$200. AAUW found that in 2007-08, women earned 57% of the bachelor's degrees that were awarded. Women were more likely than men to borrow money for school; 68% of women borrowed money for college as compared to 63% of men. In addition, women were paying a much larger portion of

their earnings toward their student loan debt than men. Data indicate that 47% of women and 39% of men were paying more than 8% of their earnings to college loan debt. An 8% benchmark for student loan payment has been determined to be reasonable or manageable for students who earn a moderate income; anything above 8% becomes unmanageable.^{xliii}

In Louisiana, however, the outlook for women acquiring loans to finance their education is brighter due to lower than average tuition rates. The debt load taken on by students in 2013 earning a bachelor's degree in Louisiana is the 10th lowest in the country at \$23,358. New Hampshire graduates had the highest average debt load at \$32,795, while New Mexico had the lowest average at \$18,656. Louisiana State University found that in fiscal year 2013-14, LSU's tuition and fees were 17% below the anticipated Southern Regional Education Board peer average of \$9,476. They also found that the average LSU graduate paid about 13% less toward student loan repayment each month than his or her peers across the country.^{xliiv} Because of this, women in Louisiana are better positioned to take advantage of opportunities immediately following graduation, because they are less likely to be overwhelmed by student debt.

iii. Sexual Health Education

According to the CDC's 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Report, the percentage of high school students having sexual intercourse has greatly decreased over the last 20 years from over 54% in the early 90's to 46.8% today.^{xliv} Louisiana currently does not mandate that sexual health education be taught in schools, but it may be offered beginning in 7th grade with the exception of Orleans Parish, where it may be offered beginning in 3rd grade. State law requires that, if sexual health education is taught, that abstinence must be emphasized and that parents may opt their children out of instruction. All educational materials must be submitted to the local or parish school board and reviewed by a parental review committee.

1. The Sexual Education Task Force

Established during the 2013 Legislative Session by Rep. Patricia Haynes Smith's House Concurrent Resolution 90, the Sexual Education Task Force was charged with studying and evaluating the effectiveness of sexual health education programs used throughout Louisiana and other states; they produced a final report of their research and recommendations in January 2014. The group met during fall and winter 2013 and compiled information on the rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases in Louisiana, reviewed sexual health education policies in all 50 states, and selected five states with comparable demographic and socio-economic profiles (Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Mississippi) for further comparison with Louisiana. Key among the group's findings was that:

- Where sexual health education is mandated in schools, STI and teen birth rates are lower.
- No state currently requires the adoption of a single curriculum, but many require criteria and standards to be met when sexual health education is provided.
- States with mandates require that students, parents and community representatives be involved in sexual health education curricula.

- Abstinence was emphasized in all comparison states, but states that provided additional components of sexual health education had lower rates of STIs and teen births.^{xlvi}

Louisiana schools are not required to submit sexual health education-related data to the Department of Education. State law prohibits the surveying of students about their sexual behavior, beliefs, and practices, and therefore Louisiana does not participate in the sexual behavior component of the Center for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, a national assessment tool that produces data frequently utilized by public health agencies applying for grants to provide services.

Among the Sexual Health Education Task Force's recommendations were the need for: evidence-based, medically accurate, age appropriate, comprehensive sexual health education to be mandated in public schools; the amendment of state statute on sexual health education to allow Louisiana students to be surveyed about their sexual behavior; tying the state implementation process for sexual health education to Local Education Agencies' existing mandate to implement School Health Advisory Committees; encouragement by the Louisiana Department of Education of Local Education Agencies to actively seek public-private partnerships to facilitate additional sexual health education opportunities and resources for students.

In addition, Act 534 from the 2014 legislative session required that agency heads from the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Hospitals, and the Department of Children and Family Services convene to address sexual health education and outcomes and to provide recommendations for a comprehensive strategy to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy and prevent the spread of STIs among Louisiana youth. The Women's Policy & Research Commission looks forward to the recommendations from the Act 534 report.

2. Choosing the Best

Choosing the Best instruction, which promotes sexual risk avoidance for students in 7th through 12th grade (in Orleans Parish, sexual education includes 6th grade students) across Louisiana, has reached nearly 18,000 Louisiana students (and over 4 million students nationwide). *Choosing the Best* (CTB) is being implemented in 14 school districts (parish-wide in Ouachita), in 14 parishes hosting community-based programs (19 sites), and in 110 schools throughout the state. Governor Jindal's Office of Louisiana Youth for Excellence (LYFE), which oversees the program as well as trains teachers in CTB instruction, has plans to extend the program to every school district in Louisiana.

The Administration for Children, Youth and Families (U.S. HHS) certified that the CTB curriculum provides medically accurate information about emotional and physical risk, STDs, pregnancy, and the limits of contraceptive use.^{xlvii} For example, detection, symptom, and transmittal information about sexually transmitted infections, like Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and HPV are taken straight from Center for Disease Control publications.^{xlviii} In fact, in order to participate in the federal grant program for sexual risk avoidance, programs must be reviewed and certified as medically accurate.

A 2010 independent research study on *Choosing the Best* (CTB) shows that students who received CTB instruction were "1.5 times more likely to delay the early onset of

sex” and the “more lessons a student received, the less likely the student was to initiate sex.”^{xlix} Another independent research study funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services showed that the rate of sexual activity was 47% lower in students who received CTB instruction versus those that did not.^l The study was administered in an Atlanta high school and its feeder middle school over the course of a year.^{li}

Although sometimes assumed to be affiliated with “religious beliefs” or a “just say no” program, *Choosing the Best* contains no reference to religion and teaches relationship education, sexual abuse prevention, refusal and character development skills. The program takes a holistic approach to health education, emphasizing the risks of sexual activity while encouraging abstinence through goal-setting and building student self-esteem.

According to the *Parents Speak Out Survey* conducted by Pulse Opinion Research’s national survey, there is strong, bipartisan support for abstinence education like *Choosing the Best*.^{lii}

- 1) Nearly 9 out of 10 parents who identify as Republican and nearly 8 out of 10 parents who identify as Democrat support abstinence education in schools.
- 2) 60% of Democrat parents and 70% of Republican parents opposed President Obama’s efforts to remove all abstinence education funding.
- 3) 78% of parents want their child to wait until marriage before engaging in sex.
 - 87% of African American parents
 - 77% of Hispanic parents
 - 73% of White parents

iv. Jump Start

Every student should leave high school prepared for success in college or prepared to enter a career or to continue training for a career. Unfortunately, that has not been the case in Louisiana in the past. After over a year of study, discussion and planning, a new career and technical education program backed by the Jindal Administration called Jump Start is being implemented. The career training is being provided by high schools, community colleges and employers. Students completing a Jump Start program will graduate from high school with a career credential.

After completing two years of core academic courses, students will spend their last two years of high school pursuing either course work that will prepare them for a four-year college or course work and training that will provide them with a career credential. The Louisiana Workforce Investment Council (WIC) has identified high-wage careers that state-wide offer students the best opportunity for employment and continued education. These pathways were recently approved:

State-wide Pathways	
1) Automobile Service 2) Carpenter 3) Certified Mechanical Drafter 4) Certified Nursing Assistant 5) Collision Repair 6) Electrician 7) Emergency Medical Tech 8) Fashion Design 9) Four Stroke Engine Tech 10) HVAC Tech	11) Industrial Maintenance Mechanic 12) Internet Web Foundations 13) Manufacturing Specialist 14) Mobile Crane Operator 15) Oil & Gas T2 Safety Systems 16) Pipefitter 17) Plumber 18) Prostart / Restaurant 19) Web Design Professional 20) Welder
Integrated Graduation Pathways	
21) Agriculture Tech 22) Digital Media and Entertainment Technology 23) Health Sciences – Patient Care and Management 24) Hospitality, Tourism, Culinary and Retail	25) Information Technology 26) Manufacturing, Construction Crafts and Logistics 27) STEM 28) Technology Specialist
Regional Graduation Pathways	
29) Business Management 30) Commercial Driver 31) Mason	32) Sheet Metal 33) Welder’s Helper 34) Public Service

These state-wide pathways, approved by WIC, represent jobs that are in high demand by employers in Louisiana and hold the potential of high wages for the students. The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) established incentives through its school accountability program for schools that should result in students choosing one of these pathways. BESE will approve additional Jump Start pathways developed by regional teams for careers needed in their areas.

Many of the state-wide high-need, high-wage career pathways represent traditionally male careers. Girls should also be encouraged to pursue career training that provides the best opportunity for financial success and advancement in the future.

v. The WISE Fund

This year, Governor Jindal signed into law the Workforce and Innovation for a Stronger Economy (WISE) Fund. This fund, also known as House Bill 1033, allocates \$40 million to higher education institutions to help them strategically align new investments in higher education with the workforce needs and emerging growth sectors in our state’s economy; to provide an incentive for institutions to increase the production of certificates, diplomas, and degrees in fields of high demand by Louisiana employers; and to spur additional research and innovation as a meaningful way of supporting economic development.^{liii}

The funds have been allocated among the five university systems using the following parameters:

- 1) Best case scenario for each system using either the Short Term or Long Term Occupational Forecast
- 2) Only funding the programs that lead to 4 and 5 star jobs (as classified by the Louisiana Workforce Commission) that require increasing the production of completers (people who complete a program of study resulting in the issuance of a credential by an accredited postsecondary institution within the state)
- 3) Including the higher costs for the health science centers
- 4) Acknowledging 15 credit hours for technical competency areas
- 5) Acknowledging the average number of credit hours required to complete programs, with the exception of Doctoral Programs which are calculated on an 80 - 20 Workforce/Research ratio
- 6) Providing a minimum level of support to a Higher Education System^{liv}

In order for university systems to receive WISE funds, they must ensure that a private company has guaranteed a match of at least 20% of the funds they receive for their system's WISE allocation. This helps to ensure that Louisiana businesses are invested in the success of the WISE Fund and that the programs funded will truly be in line with companies' staffing priorities.

While the creation of the WISE Fund shows a commitment to aligning education and employment opportunities in our state, there are currently no programming or policy initiatives in place as part of the WISE Fund initiative that focus on recruiting more women to these high-demand fields, even though data shows that women are currently underrepresented in them. Ensuring that the WISE Funds are also used to help improve the gender gap in these high-demand, male-dominated fields requires explicit recruitment and retention efforts aimed at women.

D. Women's Economic & Employment Issues

Women's ability to fully participate in the workforce, earn equal wages, start their own businesses, and achieve the same levels of career success to that of men affects not just women individually, but their families and the state's economy as a whole. This year, the state looked at the gender wage gap in both the public and the private sector, and at issues like high child care costs and industry segregation that contribute to the gap. Empowering more women to become entrepreneurs, and to grow their businesses once they do, can also have a significant positive impact on the state's economy, as well as helping to shrink Louisiana's large gender wage gap.

i. The Gender Wage Gap and the 2013 Fair Pay Task Force Report

Nationally, in 2013 women earned an average only \$.78 to every dollar earned by a man. Louisiana consistently ranks as one of the states with the largest wage gap between men and women, and in 2013 the wage gap actually grew. Louisiana now ranks as the state with the largest gender wage gap in the nation, with women earning only \$.66 to every dollar earned by a man.^{lv} However, there were significant differences in the wage gap by congressional district, outlined in Table I, "The Gender Wage Gap by Congressional District," and Table II, "Race and the Gender Wage Gap."

Table I. The Gender Wage Gap by Congressional District

Member of Congress*	District	Men's average earnings	Women's average earnings	Earnings Ratio**	Ranking in State ***
Scalise (R)	LA-1	\$51,384	\$35,655	69%	3
Richmond (D)	LA-2	\$41,079	\$31,082	76%	1
Boustany (R)	LA-3	\$51,022	\$31,119	61%	6
Fleming (R)	LA-4	\$45,508	\$30,975	68%	4
McAllister (R)	LA-5	\$41,642	\$27,033	65%	5
Cassidy (R)	LA-6	\$55,180	\$38,579	70%	2

*Represents 113th Congress

**2013 pay gap figures

***congressional districts ranked from smallest wage gap to largest^{lvi}

Table II. Race and the Gender Wage Gap

Member of Congress*	District	Percent of Overall Population that is White**	White Male Median Earnings	White Female Median Earnings	Black Male Median Earnings	Black Female Median Earnings***
Scalise (R)	LA-1	81%	\$43,273	\$26,280	\$27,350	\$20,554
Richmond (D)	LA-2	31%	\$41,303	\$27,195	\$25,070	\$19,663
Boustany (R)	LA-3	71%	\$43,519	\$21,525	\$23,900	\$16,632
Fleming (R)	LA-4	62%	\$41,362	\$23,766	\$22,649	\$17,481
McAllister (R)	LA-5	62%	\$37,360	\$22,507	\$19,507	\$15,950
Cassidy (R)	LA-6	71%	\$46,885	\$26,634	\$30,025	\$22,801

*Represents 113th Congress

**U.S. Census Data for 113th Congress^{lvii}

***Source: ACS 2009-2013 Estimates (Tables B20017A and B20017B), compiled by the Louisiana Workforce Commission, Research & Statistics Division.

It is important to note that while some districts had a closer earnings ratio between men and women, the overall average earnings in that area may be lower. For example, Louisiana District 2 had the smallest gender wage gap, but Louisiana District 6 had higher average earnings for both men and women. Also, the wage gap can vary widely between race and ethnic groups. Nationally, Hispanic or Latina women earn 89% of Hispanic or Latino men's earnings, but 54% of White men's earnings on average; African American women earn 87% of African American men's earnings, but 59% of White men's earnings on average.^{lviii} In Louisiana's six congressional districts, demographics vary, with Louisiana District 1 being the least diverse at 81% White and Louisiana District 2 being the most diverse at 31% White;^{lix} however, the wage differential between Black men and women in all the congressional districts is lower than that between White men and women.

In 2013, the Louisiana Legislature passed HCR 145, which created the Louisiana Fair Pay Task Force; the task force submitted its report to the Legislature on March 1, 2014. Among the major findings of the report was that women working in public sector employment in Louisiana, which has a merit system, wage transparency and clear steps to promotion, had an 18% smaller wage gap than women working in the private sector. Women in the private sector earned only 62.1% of the wages earned by their male counterparts, where such protections are not required. The task force focused on three factors that contribute to the gender wage gap: industry segregation, childcare and family responsibilities, and discrimination. In terms of job segregation, Louisiana women make up the minority of workers in high-wage, high-demand industries in science, engineering, technology, and math; conversely, they are over-represented in lower-wage fields such as education, healthcare support service and administrative support, although not at the more lucrative supervisory level. Also, women make up 70% of Louisiana's minimum wage workers compared to 66% nationally. In relation to childcare and family responsibilities, women were found to be responsible for the majority of this unpaid work, which can negatively affect their careers. Finally, gender discrimination was found to still be a significant concern, and legal pay secrecy and fear of retaliation were major contributors to continued gender discrimination.^{lx}

As part of the Fair Pay Task Force Report, the Louisiana Department of State Civil Service reviewed classified and unclassified employees' salaries. For classified employees, who are employed in a merit system and where pay scales are public, they found that state-wide, women made up 60% of employees and earned \$.94 to every dollar earned by their male counterparts. By contrast, for unclassified employees, who are not bound by the merit system and who are more similar to private sector at-will employees, they found that 47% of these were women and that the wage gap was larger, with women earning only \$.85 to men's dollar.

Based on their research, the Fair Pay Task Force recommended that the state create an ongoing Commission on Fair Pay to continue the work begun by this Task Force. This commission's work would include identifying methods to improve enforcement of existing law and policy; examining the possibility of imposing a requirement on state contractors and bidders to commit to and report on compliance with fair pay laws and regulations; exploring methods to lift the wages of low paid jobs, which are disproportionately held by women; evaluating the wage gap in private sector employment and propose ways to lower it through education of workers and businesses about the law and the development of a self-audit tool for businesses in Louisiana; and developing methods to encourage employers to implement

family friendly workplace policies and provide affordable daycare. The Fair Pay Task Force also recommended that the Legislature develop legislation to address statutory inconsistencies in employment discrimination law, that it re-evaluate state public sector pay, and that it plan training and recruitment activities aimed at increasing the number of women in high-demand, high-wage careers.^{lxi}

ii. Encouraging Female Entrepreneurship

Starting your own business is an increasingly popular employment option in the United States: from 2005 to 2010, the percentage of people working for themselves increased from 28% to 40% of all workers, and women-owned businesses have grown at one and a half times the rate other small businesses over the last 15 years. However, even though women have a major impact on the state's economy, Louisiana ranks 47th lowest in the nation for the number of women who are self-employed.^{lxii}

Focus on women's entrepreneurship should include not only encouragement in starting their own business, but also assistance with helping them to grow the business. Currently 90% of women-owned small businesses only employ the proprietor.^{lxiii} Research finds that women-owned firms matched or beat growth rates and revenue rates of other companies, but when they reached the 100-employee threshold or the million-dollar revenue mark they began to lag behind. Nationally, women-owned firms employ only 6% of the nation's workforce and contribute less than 4% of business revenues.^{lxiv}

To help more female entrepreneurs become major job creators, women need access to investment capital and to business networks. However, women entrepreneurs face financial and networking challenges. Women are less likely to receive funds from venture capitalists who typically help fund start-up companies. In addition, banks tend to be more reluctant to lend female entrepreneurs capital or do so at higher interest rates.^{lxv} Access to business networks is a second essential component to helping women build business relationships, but especially in male-dominated fields, it can be challenging for women entrepreneurs to find entrance into informal business networks.^{lxvi} Therefore, establishing formal and informal networks specifically for women is essential to helping expand the reach of women-owned businesses, especially in male-dominated industries such as STEM fields.

II. Trends: Women & Leadership

Women are underrepresented in leadership positions, both in the business and political worlds. Within Fortune 500 Companies, women comprise only 12.5% of corporate officers and 6.2% of the highest ranking corporate leadership positions with such titles as chairman, vice chairman, chief executive officer, or chief operating officer.^{lxvii} Catalyst, a research organization that focuses on "glass ceiling" issues, predicts that the percentage of women in top leadership positions in the largest companies will not exceed 25% until the year 2020.^{lxviii} In the political arena, women hold only 90 of the 535 seats in the U.S. Congress, which equates to 16.8% in the House of Representatives and 17% in the Senate. African American women occupy 24 seats in both the House of Representative and Senate collectively.^{lxix} In Louisiana, the Governor has appointed women to many key positions within state government; five of the Governor's cabinet secretaries are women, including his chief administrative officer, who oversees all state government operations. However, for the first time in 54 years no women were elected to serve in a state wide office for 2015. The number of women serving in elected office has been declining over the last seven years, and women make up only

12% of state house and senate members, the lowest percentage of women of any statehouse in the country.^{lxx} Appendix III, “Louisiana Women’s Leadership,” provides data on the gender distribution for different elected positions around the state. More needs to be done to encourage and support women to run for office, both because of the need for more equal representation of women in government and because, despite some cultural stereotypes that still exist, studies and research have proven that women are as skilled at leadership as men are.

One example of the leadership abilities of women are studies conducted by Barry Posner and James Kouzes, which have shown that female leaders were rated higher than men in two leadership competency areas. Women excelled in what is known as “encouraging the heart,” which correlates to women giving feedback and recognizing, rewarding and motivating individuals and teams.^{lxxi} The second competency where women excelled is called “modeling the way.” This identifies the behavior of acting with integrity, demonstrating competence, organizing and moving projects forward, meeting commitments and milestones and persevering through problems. Robert Kabacoff conducted a study that focused on men and women in senior leadership positions, primarily the positions of Senior Vice president and CEO. He analyzed the behaviors of 86 men and 86 women in their 360 degree performance assessment. The males and females were matched on the following factors: type of industry, years of management experience and organizational level. The results of the study revealed that female executives operated with higher energy and intensity, and had greater capacity to keep others involved. In addition, the study revealed that women set higher expectations for performance than their male counterpart.^{lxxii} A similar study conducted by Irwin International, a consulting firm specializing in managerial performance evaluation, carried out a gender analysis of their 915 executives. The study showed that women outperformed men in the skill areas often perceived to be directly related to male characteristics traits such as the “bottom line,” maintaining high productivity, producing high quality work, meeting project deadlines and commitments and generating new ideas. Researchers concluded in this study that women and men share the same strengths and weaknesses.^{lxxiii}

Promoting a richly diverse group of women into leadership roles will not only help make societal institutions, businesses, and governments more representative, but it can also contribute to more ethical, productive, innovative, and financially successful organizations that demonstrate higher levels of collective intelligence and are less rife with conflict.^{lxxiv}

In Louisiana one group that has worked hard to increase the number of women in public service is the Louisiana Legislative Women’s Caucus Foundation, which was established in 2005 by the state’s Women’s Caucus. This non-partisan, non-profit organization works to develop the next generation of women leaders through educational and leadership development services, activities and initiatives, and its activities have included the annual Women of Excellence Awards & Scholarships Ceremony and Reception and the new Ready to Run Louisiana initiative, which begins in spring 2015 and is in partnership with Rutgers University’s Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). Ready to Run is a non-partisan campaign training program created by CAWP to encourage women to run for elective office, position them for appointive office, work on a campaign, or get involved in public life in other ways.

Another group that has crafted strong programming to increase the number of Louisiana women pursuing leadership opportunities is the Louisiana Center for Women in Government and Business. The Center sponsors an annual women’s leadership conference that focuses on facilitating women’s

leadership and entrepreneurship skill development, with the goal of creating a dialogue between participants and experts in the fields of business finance, technology, and health care around legal issues affecting women seeking entrepreneurial opportunities. The conference hopes to empower women leaders with skills that have been validated in the arenas of government and business, to help them overcome obstacles, fortify allies, and move agendas forward in entrepreneurial endeavors and in non-traditional industries for women. The Center also sponsors an annual Louisiana Girls Leadership Academy, where girls entering grades 9-11 have an opportunity to network with peers and be mentored by experienced women to develop knowledge and skills for future leadership roles. The Louisiana Girls Leadership Academy helps its participants build skills in communication, situational leadership, public service and responsible citizenship, personal and interpersonal well-being, and a greater awareness of current issues in Louisiana public policy as they pertain to women.

III. Recommendations of the Commission

Women's issues are interconnected; policies that address one area of our lives (women's health, gender-based violence, educational attainment, and employment issues) can affect others in both positive and negative ways. Chronic disease, for example, can result in lower earning potential for women, while stronger policies around sexual assault on college campuses can lead to increased academic achievements for women. Based on the findings in this year's report, the Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission crafted the following set of policy recommendations.

A. Women's Health

1. Access to affordable dental care is a significant preventive healthcare issue for Louisiana women. Increasing the number of dentists serving poor and rural communities requires new incentives to attract these in-demand physicians.

The Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Legislature pass legislation that creates a study group to identify policies and programs to increase the number of dentists offering services to poor and rural communities in Louisiana. Additionally, they should examine the feasibility of dental hygienist law reform, and the creation of mobile prevention units that could be staffed by dental hygienists and reach rural communities more easily.

2. The human papillomavirus (HPV) is a sexually transmitted infection that affects over half of all sexually-active adults in the U.S and that causes almost all cases of cervical cancer. While state law says that each city, parish, and other local public school board that provides information relative to immunizations should provide parents or legal guardians of students in grades six through twelve information about the risks associated with HPV and the availability and effectiveness of immunization against HPV, as of 2013 only 59.8% of teen girls and 27% of teen boys in Louisiana had been vaccinated at least once.^{lxv} More must be done to ensure that teens are receiving this vital preventive vaccine.

The Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, in conjunction with the Louisiana Department of Education, work together to develop state-wide communication efforts to reassure parents about the safety of HPV vaccines and help them see the benefits of vaccination for their children, to increase the variety of providers and locations that offer

HPV vaccines, and to identify funds to remove the cost factors that could be acting as a barrier to parents having their children vaccinated.

B. Gender-Based Violence

1. Because Louisiana law currently tasks local governments with covering the cost of forensic medical examinations for rape victims, some hospitals have been charging sexual assault victims for some or all of the costs of the exam, thus essentially billing victims for the investigation of the crime perpetrated against them.

The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Legislature develop solutions to ensure that sexual assault victims are never billed for sexual assault forensic medical exams, whether or not the victim reports to law enforcement.

2. Louisiana public colleges and universities have not been provided with any state-supplied standards that guide campus sexual assault policies. This has resulted in inconsistent and unclear policies for universities to utilize when investigating campus sexual assaults, a potential for under-reporting of crimes, and a lack of adequate protections for student victims and accused students. While the Board of Regents is currently working on creating a set of policy recommendations in accordance with Executive Order BJ 2014 – 14, in order to ensure equal access to education under Title IX, the Louisiana Legislature has a responsibility to ensure that the Board of Regents has the permanent legal authority to require schools to institute best practices and consistent policies as they relate to campus sexual assaults.

The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Legislature propose legislation to give the Board of Regents (BOR) the ability to require that all state public colleges and universities have a sexual violence policy that is based on the BOR's set of policy recommendations.

3. "Dual Arrest" is the law enforcement practice of arresting both parties when called to the scene of a domestic violence-related dispute. Legally, Louisiana 46:2140 states that when a law enforcement officer receives conflicting accounts of domestic abuse or dating violence, "the officer shall evaluate each account separately to determine if one party was the predominant aggressor. In determining if one party is the predominant aggressor, the law enforcement officer may consider any other relevant factors, but shall consider the following factors based upon his or her observation:
 - (a) Evidence from complainants and other witnesses.
 - (b) The extent of personal injuries received by each person.
 - (c) Whether a person acted in self-defense.
 - (d) An imminent threat of future injury to any of the parties.
 - (e) Prior complaints of domestic abuse or dating violence, if that history can be reasonably ascertained by the officer.
 - (f) The future welfare of any minors who are present at the scene."

Arresting both parties involved in a domestic violence-related dispute is not considered best practice, because it can serve to further discourage victims from reporting abuse to law enforcement for fear of arrest, and because it ignores the reality that while many victims may use physical force in reaction to an immediate or perceived act of violence from their

abusers, they are not the predominant aggressors in the relationship. However, domestic violence advocates in Louisiana are routinely told by victims that they were taken into legal custody as part of a dual arrest; more can be done to ensure that policies and procedures mirror the requirements of state law in regard to dual arrests and the predominant aggressor.

The Louisiana Women’s Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV) work with its member agencies to collect data on the number of dual arrests reported to them by their clients, and that LCADV provide this data to the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, so that they can determine if it is necessary to set benchmarks or institute new policies to decrease the rate of domestic violence-related dual arrests state-wide.

4. Navigating the legal process can be challenging for domestic violence victims, and victim advocates can serve as an invaluable resource for victims. Advocates can provide emotional support, explain legal systems and processes, accompany victims to court proceedings, refer them to services, and advocate for the victim with attorneys. However, to ensure that advocates provide accurate and appropriate legal assistance to victims, it is essential that they receive consistent and regular training on legal practices and new laws.

The Louisiana Women’s Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Office of the Attorney General work to offer more legal trainings for victim advocates, similar to the trainings they offer for attorneys, judges, and law enforcement officers on state and federal laws and legal policies as they relate to gender-based violence.

5. A November review by the New Orleans Attorney General’s Office found that five city sex crimes detectives had not written investigative reports for 86% of the 1,290 sexual-assault or child-abuse calls they were collectively assigned to investigate from 2011 through 2013, and that officers in some cases falsified documentation.

The Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) in Baton Rouge is maintained by the Louisiana State Police (LSP), and when a DNA profile matches another crime scene or an individual, it is referred to as a CODIS hit. LSP notifies the police department by letter and requests that the department send a “reference sample” for positive confirmation. According to the New Orleans Attorney General’s Office report, a review of LSP DNA Laboratory records revealed that as of October 3, 2014, NOPD had 53 outstanding sexual assault CODIS hits dating from July of 2010 to September of 2014.^{lxxvi}

In order to ensure that victims of sexual assault come forward, they must be confident in the commitment of the police force to investigate their cases fully. Requiring that members of law enforcement be trained on the dynamics of sexual assault and methods to properly investigate sexual assault cases (just as new 2014 state laws set aside \$250,000 from the state budget for the development and implementation of a human trafficking training course for members of law enforcement), would assist in ensuring that sexual assault victims receive appropriate and consistent treatment by law enforcement officials.

The Louisiana Women’s Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Legislature require annual training for all law enforcement personnel in modules addressing sexual assault, specifically the Police Officer Standards and Training

Council's three in-service training modules currently in development. The commission also recommends that sexual assault response training be added to the basic cadet curriculum.

6. National data estimates that 1 in 6 women experiences sexual violence in her lifetime; since Louisiana's female population is well over 2 million, we can calculate that there are approximately 400,000 victims of sexual violence among us. In Louisiana, sexual assault response and evidence collection protocols differ from community to community, and there is no state-wide response protocol to sexual assault, which means there is also no effective way to monitor trends and share innovative ideas. A sexual assault task force was established during a previous legislative session to study some of these concerns, but was derailed by Hurricane Katrina and its establishing legislation was allowed to sunset multiple times, with the last sunset legislation coming from Act 232 of the 2011 regular session, allowing it to finally sunset in 2012.

In sexual assault cases, properly administered forensic exams and rape kits are an essential component to effective prosecution of offenders. While Louisiana requires that all hospitals offer services to rape victims that include court-admissible rape kits, not all hospitals across the state are equipped to properly provide these services. Since each parish in the state has different policies for where rape victims must go to receive forensic exams, it is often left to the victim to go to multiple hospitals before finding the necessary services. This confusion acts to re-traumatize victims, and can mean the difference between victims pursuing cases with law enforcement and giving up.^{lxxvii}

The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Legislature amend the statute that establishes a sexual assault task force to revive the task force, with a relevant state agency as the leader of the taskforce, and adding a representative from the Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission to the new task force. The task force would develop state-wide protocols for sexual assault prevention training, response, evidence collection and prosecution.

C. Women's Education Issues

1. A central cause of the gender wage gap is industry segregation, where industries tend to be made up mostly of either men or women. Women tend to make up the majority of lower-paying industries like education, administrative services and healthcare support. In addition, they make up 70% of minimum wage workers.^{lxxviii} The Jump Start program is an opportunity to increase the number of Louisiana high school students pursuing careers in high-demand, high-paying fields. However, because most of these fields are male-dominated in Louisiana, regional Jump Start teams should be expected to include female-oriented recruitment efforts in their initiatives in order to ensure that female high school students know they are welcome in those fields and to help them build career networks and they begin to pursue jobs.

The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Department of Education work with regional Jump Start Teams to initiate female-oriented recruitment efforts, and to establish ways to ensure that female students are well-represented in all the career pathways offered to students.

2. At the post-secondary level, more needs to be done to increase the number of women pur-

suings certifications in construction-related trades and degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math. The new WISE Fund initiative is an important investment in education state-wide that has the potential to help grow the number of qualified Louisiana workers for high-demand, high-growth industries, but to ensure that we see a greater number of women pursuing educational tracks that prepare them for jobs in industries that are traditionally male-dominated, targeted recruitment and retention efforts must be incorporated into the expectations of WISE Fund recipients if we expect to significantly increase the numbers of women in these fields.

The Louisiana Women’s Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Board of Regents encourage all college and university WISE Fund recipients to develop women’s recruitment and retention activities for their programs, and that programs track and report annually on their efforts to recruit women to their targeted degree programs.

3. The process of applying for college student loans can be confusing for parents and students alike. The potentially damaging long-term effects of large student loans should be made clear to young people and families before they apply for them. Understanding student loans should be a required component of financial literacy curriculum, and is especially important for women since they tend to take out larger amounts of loans. More generally, ensuring that female students receive strong financial literacy training as they begin college could also assist in growing the number of women entrepreneurs.

The Louisiana Women’s Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana Department of Education continue to work to incorporate the topic of student loans into its financial literacy curriculum for students. Additionally, the Commission recommends that the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance create a financial literacy webinar for all incoming post-secondary education students. Parents of these students should also be encouraged to view the student loan webinar.

D. Women’s Economic & Employment Issues

1. Louisiana’s ranking as having the largest gender wage gap in the country signifies the need to immediately undertake efforts to tackle this complex issue. Because of the multiple causes of the gender wage gap (including industry segregation, over-representation in minimum-wage jobs, child and elder-care responsibilities, and gender discrimination), creating a permanent Equal Pay Commission that can bring together experts from a variety of fields would be a pivotal next step in tackling the interconnected nature of the causes of the gender-wage gap.

The Louisiana Women’s Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Louisiana State Legislature propose legislation to create a permanent state Equal Pay Commission.

2. The recent Equal Pay Task Force report identified a lack of access to affordable quality child-care as a central causal factor in Louisiana’s large gender wage gap. Working mothers often find that the high costs of daycare make quitting their jobs to care for their children the only realistic option, especially when women in Louisiana on average earn only \$.66 to a man’s dollar. Time out from their careers means not only lost wages for women and families but missed promotions, smaller retirement funds, and lack of employer health insurance. Losing these workers weakens our workforce in both the short- and long-term, and costs the

state payroll tax revenue as well as leading to greater dependence on government-funded services.

In 2014, Louisiana has worked hard to improve the standards by which it certifies childcare centers, with the goal of making centers safer and more educationally rigorous. However, while the quality of childcare has been improved, state general funds have not been available to allocate to programs like the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in order to make more slots available to low-income families at childcare facilities. Currently the salary level parents may earn to access the subsidies from the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) remains at \$2,160 for a two-person household,^{lxxxix} and the number of children served by the program has decreased as fewer households are eligible for the program.^{lxxx} The Louisiana Children's Cabinet Advisory Board has identified expansion of the Child Care Assistance Program as a priority for the Children's Budget in addition to the Early Childhood Care and Education Council, who proposed an early learning funding model that would include a combination of federal, state, and local sources as per Act 3 legislation. The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission believes that this new funding model should include a restructuring of the funding formula for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to offer more working mothers the opportunity to go back to work to support themselves and their families.

The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that BESE develop an early learning funding model that reforms the Child Care Assistance Program's (CCAP) funding formula within current dollars to ensure that the allocation to families is adequate, fair, and covers the cost of child care.

3. Chambers of commerce organizations are important vehicles for business development in the regions they serve, providing opportunities for small business owners to network and for new entrepreneurs to learn from more seasoned business owners. Louisiana is home to 34 regional chambers of commerce, and these groups can play a central role in helping to increase the number of successful female entrepreneurs in our state.

The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the state's 34 regional chambers of commerce work collectively to establish a women's council for every chamber, and that they explore creating outreach initiatives that specifically market chamber events to women.

E. Trends: Women & Leadership

1. State boards and commissions are an integral part of the legislative process in Louisiana. They bring diverse experts in a given field together to examine topics important to citizens of the state, collect useful data and information, and provide policy recommendations that thought-leaders can use to advocate for policy and legislative action. Serving on a state board or commission is an excellent opportunity for women to build their leadership skills, and with over 500 to choose from, there are plenty of opportunities to serve.

The Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission respectfully recommends that the Committee on Senate and Governmental Affairs institute a system, available online to the public, which provides a list of board and commission vacancies so that women interested in serving on a state board or commission can more easily identify available opportunities to serve.

IV. Activities Undertaken by the Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission in 2014

A. Commission Meetings

In 2014 the Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission made engaging with community stakeholders a priority. Through meetings with subject-matter experts and community stakeholders, the Commission strove to focus on the issues of interest to the women in their communities and to craft practical recommendations to address those concerns.

In March, the Commission and the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus held a joint public meeting to invite speakers to share their views on state policies regarding nurse practitioners and the possibility of loosening the legal requirements in collaborative practice agreements with physicians. The meeting featured guest speakers from the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, the Louisiana Association of Nurse Practitioners, the American Association of Retired Persons Louisiana, the Louisiana State Medical Society, the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians, and state legislators, as well as public comment.

To gain additional perspectives on different issues of interest to women in the state, experts on entrepreneurship, early childhood education, high school and college job training programs, and college student loan debt presented at several full Commission meetings. In addition, the Commission's gender-based violence work group held two stakeholder meetings with graduate students from Louisiana State University's Women & Gender Studies Graduate Student Organization and service providers who work with survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking, and stalking. These meetings helped inform the Commission's policy recommendations and build connections between the commission and groups who work to combat violence against women.

As part of the Commission's ongoing interest in incarcerated women's issues, members of the Commission participated in its second annual tour of the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) in October. The Commission was pleased by the new career training course in welding now being offered, and hope to see LCIW continue to offer more job skills trainings in high-demand craft fields.

B. Co-Programming

The Commission endorsed two events organized by the Louisiana Center for Women in Government and Business this year: the Louisiana Women's Leadership Conference and the Louisiana Girl's Leadership Academy. This year's conference was held September 19 and 20 in New Orleans, and included guest speakers news anchor and TV host Hoda Kotb, actress Catherine Dent, and news anchor and TV host Nancy Grace. The theme for this year's Louisiana Girl's Leadership Academy was "Light the Torch and Lead," and included guest speakers author Alexis Jones, anti-child abduction activist and author Elizabeth Smart, and Demo Diva Demolition founder Simone Bruni.

C. Office on Women's Policy

This year the Office on Women's Policy continued its outreach efforts through the office's e-newsletter and web page, presentations to and meetings with regional women's commissions, and other outreach activities. Executive Director of the Office on Women's Policy, Cordelia Heaney, served

on the new Domestic Violence Prevention Commission on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, and provided technical support to this new Commission as they worked to produce their first annual report. In addition, she served on the Senate Committee on Judiciary B's Sexual Assault Working Group, which is looking at campus sexual assault policies at Louisiana's colleges and universities, and participated in the New Orleans Sexual Assault Response Team as it works to continue to build a strong coordinated community response to sexual assault between service providers, law enforcement and prosecutors in Louisiana's largest city.

V. Appendices

Appendix I. Louisiana Teen Birth Statistics

2013 LA Teen Birth Rates By Parish*			
Parishes	Live Births to Mothers Aged 15-19	Population ages 15-19	Teen Birth Rate Ages 15-19**
Louisiana	5782	148115	39.04
Acadia	134	2025	66.17
Allen	50	693	72.15
Ascension	114	3779	30.17
Assumption	26	732	35.52
Avoyelles	90	1181	76.21
Beauregard	54	1164	46.39
Bienville	19	419	45.35
Bossier	127	3629	35.00
Caddo	429	7853	54.63
Calcasieu	284	6293	45.13
Caldwell	17	260	65.38
Cameron	<5	230	17.39
Catahoula	11	283	38.87
Claiborne	26	439	59.23
Concordia	32	623	51.36
Desoto	40	877	45.61
E. Baton Rouge	476	16456	28.93
E. Carroll	18	221	81.45
E. Feliciana	16	467	34.26
Evangeline	73	1092	66.85
Franklin	31	629	49.28
Grant	34	598	56.86
Iberia	121	2481	48.77
Iberville	38	906	41.94
Jackson	18	460	39.13
Jefferson	381	11899	32.02
Jeff Davis	42	1015	41.38
Lafayette	258	7431	34.72
Lafourche	100	3158	31.67
LaSalle	18	426	42.25
Lincoln	58	2524	22.98
Livingston	166	4230	39.24

Parishes	Live Births to Mothers	Population ages 15-19	Teen Birth Rate Ages 15-19**
Madison	23	361	63.71
Morehouse	38	784	48.47
Natchitoches	52	1859	27.97
Orleans	339	11104	30.53
Ouachita	241	5512	43.72
Plaquemines	14	786	17.81
Pointe Coupee	29	720	40.28
Rapides	190	4372	43.46
Red River	17	268	63.43
Richland	34	631	53.88
Sabine	39	708	55.08
St. Bernard	52	1317	39.48
St. Charles	55	1890	29.10
St. Helena	11	321	34.27
St. James	14	704	19.89
St. John	36	1450	24.83
St. Landry	167	2778	60.12
St. Martin	75	1693	44.30
St. Mary	91	1770	51.41
St. Tammany	168	7839	21.43
Tangipahoa	206	4578	45.00
Tensas	5	146	34.25
Terrebonne	163	3524	46.25
Union	33	591	55.84
Vermilion	81	1889	42.88
Vernon	93	1483	62.71
Washington	54	1447	37.32
Webster	67	1241	53.99
West Baton Rouge	33	755	43.71
West Carroll	20	354	56.50
West Feliciana	13	356	36.52
Winn	24	411	58.39

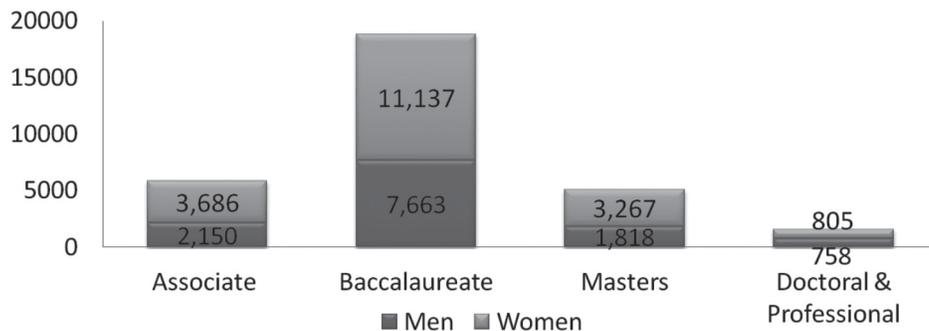
Source: 2013 Preliminary Live Births: Louisiana Vital Records Registry

* Please note that the data are preliminary, as of 11/21/14, and may be subject to slight fluctuation when finalized.

** Birth rate is per 1,000 population

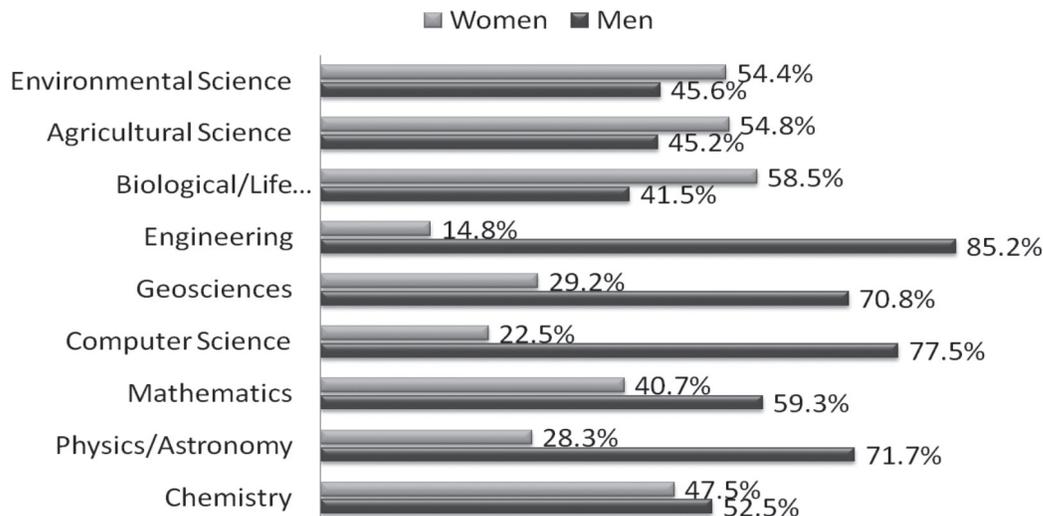
2013-2014 Degrees Awarded by Degree Level and Gender

In 2013-14, women earned more degrees than men.



Compiled by the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus with information obtained from the Louisiana Board of Regents. (Run Date: 08/14/2014) 2013-2014 Degrees and Certificates Awarded by Degree Level, Race, Gender, Residency Public Institution Totals (CMPLRASX)

2013-2014 Math & Science Degrees and Certificates Awarded Louisiana Public Institutional Totals



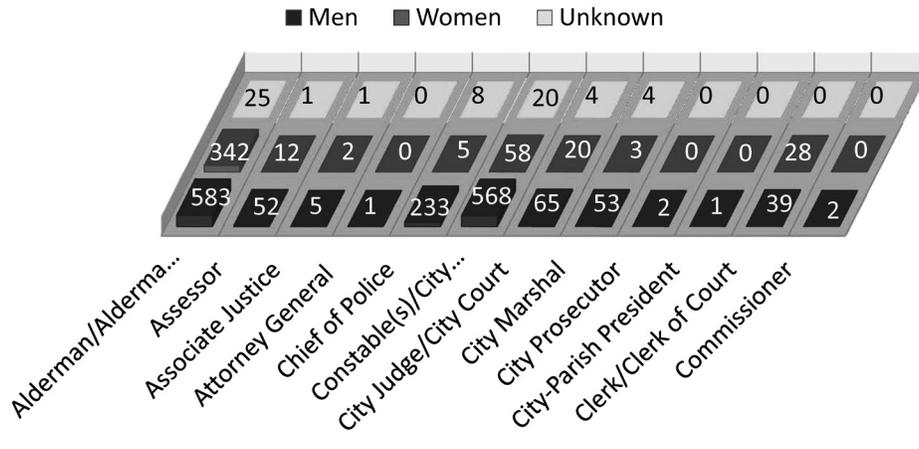
Compiled by the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus with information obtained from the Louisiana Board of Regents. (Run-Date: August 14, 2014) 2013-2014 Math and Science Degrees and Certificates Awarded Public Institutional Totals (CMPLLAMP)

2013-2014		
Math & Science Degrees and Certificates Awarded		
Louisiana Public Institutional Totals		
Degree Area	Men	Women
Chemistry	83	75
Physics/Astronomy	43	17
Mathematics	147	101
Computer Science	811	236
Geosciences	102	42
Engineering	2,462	427
Biological/Life Sciences	539	761
Agricultural Science	175	212
Environmental Science	31	37
<p>Compiled by the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus with information obtained from the Louisiana Board of Regents. (Run-Date August 14, 2014) 2013-2014 Math and Science Degrees and Certificates Awarded Public Institutional Totals (CMPLLAMP)</p>		

Appendix III. Louisiana Women's Leadership

Louisiana Public Sector-Elected Officials

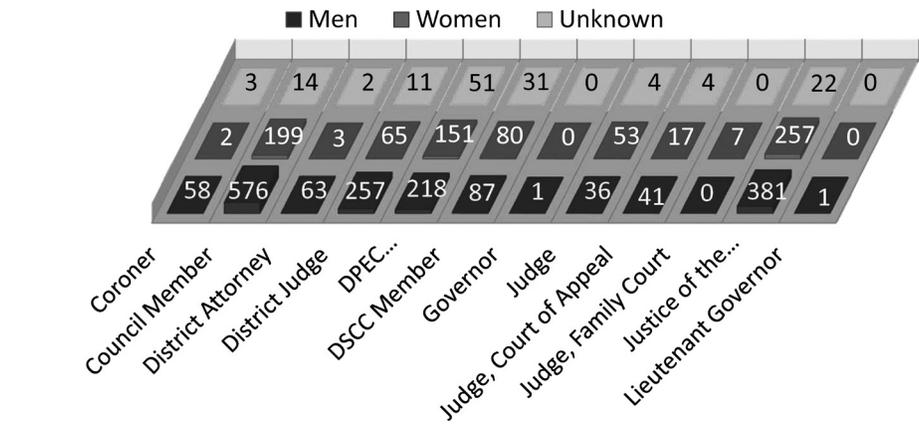
Overall, Louisiana Women Make-up Approximately 25% of Elected Offices in Federal, State and Local Governments



Compiled by the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus with information obtained from the Louisiana Secretary of State's Office, September 10, 2014.

Louisiana Public Sector-Elected Officials

Overall, Louisiana Women Make-up Approximately 25% of Elected Offices in Federal, State and Local Governments

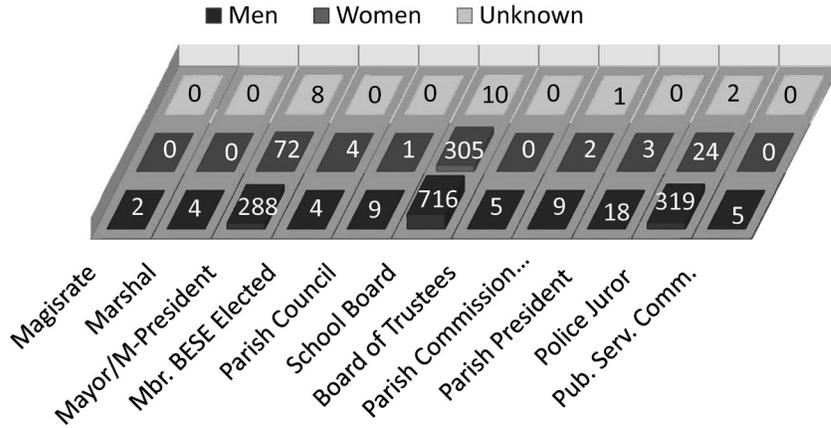


Compiled by the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus with information obtained from the Louisiana Secretary of State's Office, September 10, 2014.

Louisiana

Public Sector-Elected Officials

Overall, Louisiana Women Make-up Approximately 25% of Elected Offices in Federal, State and Local Governments

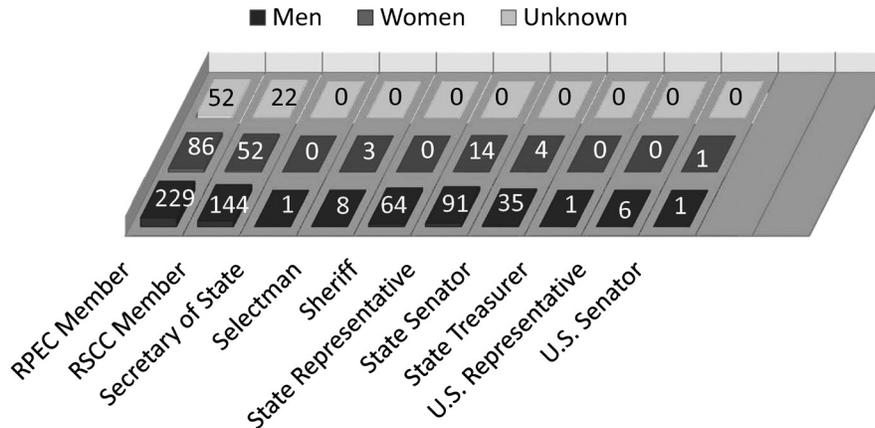


Compiled by the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus with information obtained from the Louisiana Secretary of State's Office, September 10, 2014.

Louisiana

Public Sector-Elected Officials

Overall, Louisiana Women Make-up Approximately 25% of Elected Offices in Federal, State and Local Governments



Compiled by the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus with information obtained from the Louisiana Secretary of State's Office, September 10, 2014.

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Louisiana Board of Regents

Louisiana Center for Women in Government and Business, Nicholls State University

Louisiana Department of Administration

Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services

Louisiana Department of Economic Development

Louisiana Department of Education

Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals

Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus

Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus Foundation

Louisiana State University's Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Student Organization

Louisiana Workforce Commission

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