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REVIEW VOL. 90
ISSUE 7

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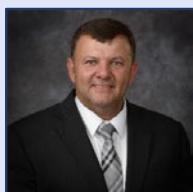
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Sharing Ideas and Working Together

As we get closer to our 88th Annual Convention in Lake Charles, I want to take a moment this month to share how excited I am to see everyone there. Our upcoming convention will be a wonderful chance for us to come together, catch up with old friends, meet new faces, and share ideas about how we can do our jobs even better. It's a great opportunity for us to strengthen our teamwork and focus on ways to serve our communities more effectively.

I was so pleased by the enthusiasm and involvement I saw during our District Meetings in June. It was wonderful to see so many of you in person, talking face-to-face about the challenges your communities are facing. Whether it's updating streets, improving safety, or providing better services, your concerns and ideas matter. Hearing your stories and seeing your dedication reminded me why we do this important work. Your commitment to your communities is inspiring and motivates all of us to keep working hard every day for the people we serve.

During these meetings, it became very clear that although our communities face many problems, there is also a strong desire to keep moving forward. These conversations help us decide what to focus on in the future, and they remind us that working together and sharing ideas is the key to solving big problems.

In this month's magazine, you'll get a full look at what's coming up at convention. You'll find details about the main speakers, the work-

shops, and other activities planned. The event will focus on many important topics, and we want to give you practical tools and ideas that you can take back to your communities and use right away.

This month's magazine also talks about hurricane and disaster recovery. Louisiana has faced many storms and hurricanes over the years, and we have learned a lot from these tough experiences. Our collective experience reminds us how important it is to stay prepared, be ready to respond quickly, and recover efficiently. Preparing for disasters is more than just having plans; it's about making sure every community has the tools and resources they need before a storm hits.

Looking ahead to Lake Charles and our convention, I want to encourage everyone to bring

their ideas, ask questions, and get involved. This isn't just a convention. It's a gathering of friends and partners working to make Louisiana's villages, towns, and cities better every day. It's a chance to learn from others, share your own experiences, and renew your commitment to the people you serve.

I want to thank each of you for your hard work and your leadership. The effort you put into your jobs makes a difference in people's lives. During difficult times like storms or economic downturns, your dedication keeps our communities safe, strong, and moving forward. Your work is vital, and it's appreciated more than words can say.


I look forward to seeing you soon in Lake Charles. Together, we'll share stories of progress, discuss new ideas, and



Barney Arceneaux
LMA Executive Director

find ways to do even more for our communities. This is a time to come together, to learn from each other, and to plan for a better future.

Until then, please stay safe, stay involved, and remember that your contributions are very important. Your work helps build a stronger Louisiana, and we're grateful for everything you do.



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A Grateful Farewell and a Look Forward

As my term as your LMA President draws to a close, I find myself filled with a profound sense of gratitude and a deep admiration for the dedication each of you brings to your respective communities. Serving in this role has been an honor and a privilege, and I am eager to share some reflections on our journey together and the path that lies ahead.

Over the past year, we have navigated challenges, celebrated successes, and forged stronger bonds that unite us as municipal leaders. I have witnessed firsthand the unwavering commitment you

all have to improving the quality of life for the residents of our villages, towns, and cities.

One of the most important aspects of our work has been fostering strong relationships between our municipal leaders and our state and federal elected officials. As we all know, these relationships are essential, especially in our rural areas where resources and support can make a significant difference. By working together, we have been able to access more resources and advocate for our members. Our collective voice has

grown louder, ensuring that our communities receive the resources necessary to thrive.

Our collaborative spirit has extended to ensuring compliance with the laws and regulations that affect us. State and federal representatives have guided us through complex rules, enabling us to implement local programs effectively. We have actively participated in policy discussions at the state and federal levels, ensuring that our concerns and perspectives are taken into account when decisions are made. By advocating for laws that make sense for our communities, we have strengthened the trust between elected officials and the people we serve, fostering a more engaged citizenry.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for our partnerships with the Louisiana Municipal Advisory and Technical Services (LaMATS) and Risk Management, Inc. (RMI). These organizations have provided invaluable resources and services that have helped our cities, towns, and villages grow, stay safe, and be more efficient. From expert advice to risk management and insurance solutions, these partnerships have made our jobs easier and allowed us to focus on improving the lives of our residents.

As we look forward, I encourage each of you to take full advantage of the resources that the LMA, LaMATS, and RMI offer. Their expertise can make a significant difference



Rick Allen
LMA President
Leesville

in how well your municipality operates, and they are here to support you every step of the way.

As I pass the torch to the next President, I am confident that the LMA will continue to thrive and that our collective efforts will lead to even greater accomplishments. I encourage each of you to remain engaged, to participate actively, and to continue building strong relationships with your fellow municipal leaders, state and federal officials, and community members.

Finally, I want to thank each and every one of you for your support, your dedication, and your unwavering commitment to serving the people of Louisiana. It has been an honor to serve as your President, and I look forward to continuing to work alongside you in the years to come.

Wishing you all the best in your continued efforts to build stronger, safer, and more prosperous communities.



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Reclaiming Civics, Sanity, and Shared Progress

I don't remember the exact grade, 8th or 9th I think, but I do remember taking Civics class. This is where we were taught how government works and although it was over 35 years ago, the lessons learned are still stuck in my brain. Checks and balances. The art of compromise. The civic duty of voting. The three branches of government. Today, that framework I learned about in the late 80s feels like ancient history. What passes for political discourse now looks more like a WWE grudge match than democracy in motion.

We've gone from the people's business to political theater. From governing coalitions to zero-sum cage matches. From principled debate to brand warfare. What's been lost in this ideological tug-of-war is the very thing we were taught to cherish: governance that serves *all* the people.

As an independent voter for 30 years, I've watched both major parties declare victories in the name of "the overwhelming majority." But let's do a little math. Louisiana has roughly 3 million registered voters. A "high turnout" in a presidential election year gets us to about 66%. In local and municipal races, we often struggle to cross 40%.

So, let's say a city has 10,000 voters. If 4,000 (40%) show up to vote, and 51% of them cast their ballot one way, that's just over 2,000 people determining policy for the entire city. The same math applies when the voter turnout is 30% and even 20%, and let's face it - that's not a mandate. That's not even a majority of *registered* voters. That's a big red flag telling us the electorate has lost faith in democracy because no matter which party is in power, they feel powerless - decade after decade.

It's easy to point fingers. Harder to tell the truth: Our system reflects our collective condition. And the real silent majority? It isn't on either side of the aisle. In the example above, it's the 6,000 eligible voters who sat it out. That silence speaks volumes and what it says is, "I don't believe you anymore."

That's where the adults in the room should come in. Not to win a war of soundbites. Not to rip out what came before just to replace it with something that fits their brand. But to build - brick by brick. Not with ego, but with intention.

Progress, real progress, doesn't come from ideological swings. It comes from recognizing what's working, no matter who

started it. From improving what's broken without burning it all down. From leadership that sees beyond election cycles and power plays.

So, I'll ask what many Louisianans are quietly wondering: Where are the adults in the room?

Not the loudest voices in the echo chamber. Not the masters of deflection or the curators of chaos. But the leaders, elected or otherwise, who are willing to trade partisanship for partnership. Ego for excellence. Control for collaboration.

To be honest, we, the electorate, are exhausted - not because we don't care, but because we *do*. And we're watching. Watching to see if any of our elected leaders are brave enough to tell hard truths, resist petty fights, and refuse the temptation to win the news cycle at the expense of real change.

Because here's the truth: Louisiana doesn't need another war of words. Our cities, towns, and villages need a blueprint. A bridge. A band of builders who can look beyond their own timelines and into our collective future.

We need leaders who will run toward responsibility, not from it. Citizens who will show up not just at the ballot box, but at the budget meeting. Elders who will mentor the next generation into public service. And young people who will see public trust not as a relic, but as a challenge worth accepting.

Imagine this: a Louisiana that doesn't just wait for someone else to get it right but decides to lead the way. A state known not for last-place rankings, but for first-class, community-centered innovation. Not for dysfunction, but for dignity. Not for division, but for discernment.

That's what happens when the adults return to the room.

*Progress,
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no matter who
started it.*



**by Anita
Tillman**
Managing Editor

Anita is the CEO of AMCorp International and has served as the LMA's Communications Consultant since 2016. She can be reached at anita@teamamcorp.com or by phone at 225-324-5444.

2025 Legislative Session Recap

My team and I spent the past year, including actively participating in 14 auto insurance-focused committee hearings, working with legislators to draft and support a comprehensive package of legislation aimed at reducing the cost drivers in our insurance system and improving insurance regulation in Louisiana.

Insurance & Legal Reform

Louisiana passed a significant package of legal reform bills this session. Of the 20 insurance and legal reform bills I supported at the beginning of session, five have become law:

- Act 15 (HB 431) by Rep. Chenevert transitions Louisiana from a pure to modified comparative fault system, which limits the ability for the person who is mostly at fault for an accident to recover damages from the other party.
- Act 18 (HB 450) by Rep. Melerine reverses the presumption that a plaintiff's injuries resulted from a car accident.
- Act 85 (HB 438) by Rep. Firmont prevents insurers from including institutional advertising expenses in their ratemaking.
- Act 288 (HB 519) by Rep. Glorioso generally prohibits holding and using a cell phone while driving to make phone calls, text or otherwise use the device.
- Act 313 (HB 635) by Rep. Bamburg modernizes Louisiana's captive insurer law.

Three of the 20 bills have been sent to the governor and are awaiting his decision:

- HB 280 by Rep. Melerine clarifies a workers' comp payroll audit issue.
- HB 437 by Rep. Firmont provides for clearer proof of loss requirements that can help simplify the claims process and creates stiffer penalties for insurers that do not provide rental car benefits in timely manner.
- SB 136 by Sen. Talbot requires insurers to provide rate transparency reports to consumers when offering a policy.

Regulatory & Property Insurance Improvements

Of the 19 regulatory and property insurance bills I supported at the beginning of session, nine have become law:

- Act 19 (HB 549) by Rep. Schamerhorn requires insurers to offer a discount for commercial vehicles that have a dash cam and telematics system.
- Act 29 (SB 40) by Sen. Wheat requires continuing education training on new laws for agents.
- Act 32 (SB 52) by Sen. McMath creates an individual state income tax exemption for grant funds received from the Louisiana Fortify Homes Program (LFHP).
- Act 62 (HB 122) by Rep. Berault creates a voluntary roof registry at the Louisiana Department of Insurance (LDI).
- Act 79 (HB 329) by Rep. Hebert directs a portion of taxes and fees paid by insurers, insurance professionals and other regulated entities to fund the LFHP.
- Act 83 (HB 401) by Rep. Dickerson stabilizes available funding for anti-fraud work performed by the LDI, State Police and Department of Justice.

- Act 144 (HB 121) by Rep. Adams strengthens requirements for public adjusters and home improvement contractors.
- Act 182 (HB 345) by Rep. Wyble increases the notice of cancellation and nonrenewal period to 60 days for most personal and commercial P&C insurance lines and requires that the notice includes the cause for the nonrenewal so policyholders may address the issue and improve their insurability while shopping for a new policy.
- Act 239 (HB 85) by Rep. Gadberry strengthens local enforcement of roof compliance with building codes.



*Tim Temple
Commissioner, Louisiana
Department of Insurance*

Four of the 19 have been sent to the governor and are awaiting his decision:

- HB 145 by Rep. Wilder increases the tax deduction for self-funding a FORTIFIED roof retrofit from \$5,000 to \$10,000.
- HB 441 by Rep. Henry increases fees paid by insurers, insurance professionals and other regulated entities for the purpose of funding the LFHP.
- SB 28 by Sen. Talbot establishes an income tax credit of up to \$10,000 for taxpayers who pay to have their roof retrofitted to the FORTIFIED standard.
- SB 137 by Sen. Talbot requires insurers to notify the LDI when they change their writing activity to help our staff monitor the overall market and provide better advice to consumers.

Destabilizing the Market

Originally introduced as HB 576 by Rep. Carter and amended by Rep. Glorioso into HB 148 by Rep. Wiley, Act 11 gives the insurance commissioner unilateral authority to disapprove rate requests and publish proprietary and/or confidential information for purely political, personal and other subjective reasons.

Instead of helping address our insurance crisis, this new law makes Louisiana's insurance industry more heavily regulated than California's. This is not the right path for Louisiana. We compete against other states for insurance capacity and must maintain our unbiased, predictable regulatory environment protects consumers and ensures the financial stability of insurers.

As we begin the hard work of implementing the reforms that have just passed, my staff and I are already looking forward to working with legislators next session to continue strengthening Louisiana's insurance markets for the citizens of our great state.



A Little Help from Above



Aerial photo taken during emergency operations by LaMATS Drone Imaging Service in partnership with ULM's UAS Research Center.

FEMA Partners with ULM to Train Louisiana First Responders in Aerial Drone Operations

In a first-of-its-kind training opportunity, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in partnership with the University of Louisiana Monroe's Precision Ag & UAS (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) Research Center, now offers hands-on instruction in drone technology to Louisiana police officers, fire fighters, dispatchers, and other municipal personnel charged with providing front-line emergency services.

Funded through FEMA's "ASSUREd Safe" program, which works with colleges nationwide to enhance local emergency response capabilities through drone technologies, the two-day ULM training sessions (July 29-30 and August 5-6) will introduce First Responders to UAS flight

operations and data analysis techniques useful in a variety of emergency response scenarios.

"The training teaches students how to [operate] drones, how to collect data and process the data properly," explained Darion Flunder-Jenkins, Assistant Professor of Aviation and Director of the Precision Ag & UAS Research Center at ULM. In flight operations training, First Responders will learn how to survey disaster areas after hurricanes and local storms. "We've seen an increase in tornadoes here in Louisiana," noted the professor. Drone operators working from a safe distance will be better able to determine if survivors are still located at the disaster area, and, "if the first responders can't directly get to them, they can utilize the drone in order to contact them prior to [first-hand assistance] getting to them," he said.

With the data analysis component, drone-produced digital products including photos, videos, multi- and hyper-spectral imaging, and LIDAR scans of roads and bridges, can aid with overall damage assessment by "giving that information to FEMA so they can deter-



mine exactly how much funding the state would need in order to recover from the disaster.”

Flunder-Jenkins mentioned that non-emergency situations, such as public safety surveillance of large festivals and parades, are also included in training scenarios. A mix of civic, agricultural, and industrial drone applications have been standard fare of the Center’s work since its inception in 2014. The growth of its training curriculum over the past decade mirrors that of the technology’s own rapid expansion. “Prior to the expansion of the drones into the commercial industry, 90% of the technology’s use was in agriculture,” he said. Today, only 13% of all drone applications are within the Ag sector.

With more than 40 drones of 10 different manufacturers in the ULM fleet, the range

of potential uses is considerable. “We try to expand outside of the ‘Ag aspect’ into different disciplines, to integrate drones so that we’re bringing adequate work progress to those industries as well.”

Registration for the two upcoming training modules is open now and available to any municipal staff, including those in administrative positions, who might find it useful. Participants must sign up at FEMA’s ASSUREd Safe website (see QR code) for the classes entitled “FEMA:

Scan this code for link to training registration.



AWR-422 Intro to UAS Flight Operations” and “FEMA: PER-407 Intro to UAS Data Analytics” to receive full credit for the two days of on-site training.

Further inquiries can be directed to Dar-rion Flunder-Jenkins, ULM Precision Ag & UAS Research Center, at 318.342.1168 or via email at djenkins@ulm.edu.



**by Cliff
Palmer**

**LaMATS Executive
Director**

Palmer leads the Louisiana Municipal Advisory and Technical Services Bureau (LaMATS) - a subsidiary of LMA. He can be reached at cpalmer@lamats.net.

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OVERVIEW

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A Municipal Advisor (or “MA”) serves as a consultant advising the governing authority on matters relating to the following:

- **Financial feasibility of projects;**
- **Total cost analysis of financing alternatives;**
- **Review of capital improvement financing programs;**
- **Advice on the structuring and marketing of debt securities.**

The MA is an integral member of the governing authority’s management team, providing independent advice and analysis to assist in financial decision-making.



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- Analyzing available alternatives in relation to cost to the governing authority and providing financial guidance and recommendations;
- Analyzing from a cost/benefit standpoint the use of incentives (free land, subsidy of bond issues, utility improvements) to attract industry;
- Providing a detailed upfront and long-term financial analysis of costs to the governing authority versus benefits of the specific project; and
- Serving as an economic development finance resource for the Governing Authority.

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We Have The Experience!



RMI Will See You in Lake Charles

It doesn't seem as though it's been a year, yet here we are – all of us ready to connect and join together at the LMA's Annual Convention again. This year, we'll be in Lake Charles at the Lake Charles Event Center.

As a sponsor and vendor, we look forward to talking with you about the many services we can offer and how those services can not only assist your municipalities but also save you money. Our services include General Liability, Automobile Liability, Law Enforcement Professional Liability, Public Official Errors and Omissions, Workman's Compensation, Dental, Cyber Liability, Accident and Health, Automobile Collision/Comprehensive (Physical Damage), Airport Commercial General Liability, Fire and Property, Personal Automobile, Inland Marine, and More!

We'll be holding a convention workshop on Wednesday, July 30, at 9:45 AM, where a panel discussion will focus on municipal coverages with RMI's property and health benefit partners.

Make sure you stop by and visit us at our vendor booth, say hello when you come to our workshop, or stop us if you see us walking by. We invite discussions so that you have a clear picture of what services you can best utilize to save you money and unwanted headaches.

See you soon!



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by Patrick Cronin

**General Manager,
RMI**

Cronin leads Risk Management, Inc. (RMI) - a subsidiary of LMA. He can be reached at pcronin@rmila.com.

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Louisiana Municipal Association 88th Annual Convention July 29 – 31, 2025



REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- **DELEGATE REGISTRATION:** Choose this if you are an elected or appointed official or if you are an employee of a municipality [Ex: clerk, public works director, CAO, etc.]
- **GUEST REGISTRATION:** Select this option if you have a guest attending. Your registration fee includes ONE complimentary guest registration. Guest registration includes entry into the receptions/meal events, a guest gift and ONE guest banquet ticket. **A GUEST CANNOT BE AN ELECTED/APPOINTED OFFICIAL OR A MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE.**
- **REGISTRATION FEES:** The 'Early Bird' registration fee of \$250 ends on June 19. Regular registration fees (\$300) are June 20-July 17. Late and On-Site registration fees (\$350) begin July 18.
Note: There are no daily registration rates.
- **REGISTRATION FORMS:** Emailed and faxed registration forms are NOT considered pre-registered; therefore, the attendee must register on-site.

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Louisiana Municipal Association
88th Annual Convention
July 29 – 31, 2025

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REFUND POLICY:

An administrative fee of \$75 will be charged for all cancellations, including medical emergencies. No refunds will be given after **Tuesday, July 15** (two weeks prior to the start of event). Refunds will be issued only if the LMA office receives your cancellation request in the **form of a letter on your official letterhead mailed, emailed, faxed, or delivered to our office with a postmark date no later than Tuesday, July 15, 2025**. Telephone requests for refunds are not acceptable. There will be no exceptions to this policy.



Louisiana Municipal Association
88th Annual Convention
July 29 – 31, 2025

REFUND POLICY

An administrative fee of \$75 will be charged for all cancellations, including medical emergencies. No refunds will be given after **Tuesday, July 15** (two weeks prior to the start of event). Refunds will be issued only if the LMA office receives your cancellation request in the **form of a letter on your official letterhead mailed, emailed, faxed, or delivered to our office with a postmark date no later than Tuesday, July 15, 2025**. Telephone requests for refunds are not acceptable. There will be no exceptions to this policy.





LOUISIANA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION 88th ANNUAL CONVENTION JULY 29 – 31, 2025 LAKE CHARLES CIVIC CENTER



TENTATIVE AT-A-GLANCE AGENDA

TUESDAY, JULY 29

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.: Registration

Mezzanine 2nd Floor

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.: Exhibits

Exhibition Hall 1st Floor

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.: Eats & Exhibits

Coliseum 1st Floor



Sponsored by:

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.: Meetings of Affiliate and Related Organizations

- Louisiana Municipal Black Caucus-Local Elected Officials (*Contraband Room 2nd Floor*)
- Chief Administrative Officers/Chiefs of Staff Meeting (*Jean Lafitte Room 3rd Floor*)

3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.: Opening General Session

Rosa Hart Theatre 2nd Floor

5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.: Kick-Off Reception

Coliseum 1st Floor

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30

8:00 a.m.: Registration and Exhibits Open

Distribution of Voting Credentials

8:15 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.: Prayer Breakfast

Coliseum 1st Floor

Hosted by:



9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.: Concurrent Workshop Sessions

- Legislative Auditor Workshop (*Contraband Room 2nd Floor*)
- Municipal Coverages with RMI Property and Benefit Partners (*Buccaneer Room A 3rd Floor*)
- From Potholes to Pavement Plans: How Local Agencies Can Stretch Dollars and Save Roads (*Buccaneer Room B 3rd Floor*)
- Mayor's Court (*Buccaneer Room C 3rd Floor*)
- Economic Perspectives and the Direction of Interest Rates (*Jean Lafitte Room 3rd Floor*)

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.: Discover Broussard Taste and Sips Mayor's Talk Podcast

3rd Floor Lobby

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Last Chance! Exhibit Viewing

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.: Concurrent Workshop Sessions

- Attorney General Municipal Opinions Update (*Contraband Room 2nd Floor*)
- LGAP/CWEF Programs (*Buccaneer Room A 3rd Floor*)
- Once Upon A Municipality: Making Your Community the Main Character (*Buccaneer Room B 3rd Floor*)
- Retail Ready (*Buccaneer Room C 3rd Floor*)
- Utility Systems: Emergency Response/First Responder (*Jean Lafitte Room 3rd Floor*)

12:00 p.m.: Exhibits Close

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Leadership Luncheon

Coliseum 1st Floor

1:45 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.: Concurrent Workshop Sessions

- Dealing with Today's Common Municipality: Workplace Challenges PART 1 (*Contraband Room 2nd Floor*)
- Carbon Capture (*Buccaneer Room A 3rd Floor*)
- LaMATs Show and Tell (*Buccaneer Room C 3rd Floor*)
- What Municipal Leaders Need to Know About PFAS (*Jean Lafitte Room 3rd Floor*)

3:00 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.: Concurrent Workshop Sessions

- Dealing with Today's Common Municipality: Workplace Challenges PART 2 (*Contraband Room 2nd Floor*)
- The Power of Master Planning and Unique Solar Opportunities (*Buccaneer Room A 3rd Floor*)
- LITACorp: Gateway for Federal Funding (*Buccaneer Room C 3rd Floor*)
- Sponsor Workshop (*Jean Lafitte Room 3rd Floor*)

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.: LMA Annual Business Meeting

Contraband Room 2nd Floor

4:00 p.m.: Louisiana Municipal Clerks Association Executive Board Meeting

Jean Lafitte Room 3rd Floor

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.: Host City Reception and Dance

L'Auberge Casino

THURSDAY, JULY 31

8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.: Registration

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.: Guest Tour

9:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.: Concurrent Workshop Sessions



- Small Town Mayors Meeting (*Contraband Room 2nd Floor*)
- Incorporating Arts in Your Community (*Buccaneer Room A 3rd Floor*)
- Public/Private Partnerships (*Buccaneer Room C 3rd Floor*)
- Sponsor Workshop (*Jean Lafitte Room 3rd Floor*)

12:00 p.m.: Delegates Luncheon
Coliseum 1st Floor

7:00 p.m.: Annual Banquet
Coliseum 1st Floor

- Presentation of 2024 Community Achievement Awards
- Closing Dance

10:30 a.m.-11:45 a.m.: Concurrent Workshop Sessions

- Mid-Sized Cities Meeting (*Contraband Room 2nd Floor*)
- Mayors/Police Chiefs (*Buccaneer Room A 3rd Floor*)
- Blackbelt Energy (*Jean Lafitte Room 3rd Floor*)

This is a tentative convention agenda, subject to change. Detailed information on events, dates, and times will be provided as activities are confirmed.

VOTING CREDENTIALS

LMA members must pick up their voting credentials at the convention registration desk between 8:00 AM and 2:30 PM on Wednesday, July 30, or at the entrance to the meeting room prior to the start of the Annual Business Meeting. An elected official from each voting municipality must be present at

the meeting when the roll is called in order to receive a ballot.

Only elected officials may sign for and receive voting credentials, and only elected officials may cast the municipality's vote.

In order to vote, the municipality must have paid



its 2025 LMA dues in full by July 15, 2025. Only one vote per municipality may be cast.

Industry Announcement: Jerry Drummond Retires After 35 Years



After 35 years of dedicated service, Jerry Drummond, longtime Sales Manager at CSDC — now MonetaCode — is retiring.

Jerry has been instrumental to the company's growth, known for his deep commitment to both clients and colleagues. His leadership, integrity, and passion have helped shape MonetaCode into the company it is today.

We thank Jerry for his unwavering dedication and the lasting impact he's made. Please join us in celebrating his remarkable career and wishing him the very best in retirement.

Joe Helleny
President, CEO
MonetaCode





Reservations process opens for LMA's 88th Annual Convention July 29 – 31, 2025 Lake Charles Civic Center City of Lake Charles



CONVENTION HOTELS

To secure a hotel reservation, you must give the reservation clerk your name, title, and name of municipality. No more than 10 rooms per municipality are allowed. State law allows an exemption from sales tax on sleeping rooms reserved by officials representing government entities. When making reservations, it is your responsibility to inform the hotel of your tax-exempt status and submit the required form to claim the exemption.

Rates cited are nightly, exclusive of taxes. Hotels are listed alphabetically with complete address and contact information.

Best Western PLUS

1200 Pintail St.
Lake Charles, LA 70665
(337) 625-9000
\$99.00 Flat Rate

Group Name: 25 LA Municipal Association
Convention
Group Code: 25MUNI

Candlewood Suites Lake Charles South

1105 W. Prien Lake Rd.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 478-8008
\$119.00/Single or \$129.00/Double

DoubleTree by Hilton Sulphur Lake Charles

330 Arena Rd.
Sulphur, LA 70665
(337) 527-0892
\$129.00 Flat Rate

Golden Nugget Lake Charles Hotel & Casino

2550 Golden Nugget Blvd.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(844) 777-4653
\$179.00 Flat Rate/\$20.99 Resort Fee
Group Code: LMA04A
Reservation Cut-Off: Friday, June 27, 2025

Hampton Inn Lake Charles

3175 Holly Hill Rd.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 480-6443
\$149.00 Flat Rate

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Lake Charles

402 North Martin Luther King Hwy.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 491-6600
\$128.99/Single
\$138.99/Double

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Sulphur

102 Mallard St.
Sulphur, LA 70665
(337) 625-2500
\$107.00 Flat Rate
Group Name: 25 LA Municipal Association
Convention Group Code: MAC

Home2 Suites by Hilton

1200 W Prien Lake Rd.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 990-5330
\$149.00 Flat Rate

Group Name: 25 LA Municipal Association
Convention

Horseshoe Lake Charles

100 Westlake Ave.
Westlake, LA 70669
(337) 430-2300 or 1-800-CAESARS
\$139.00 Flat Rate
Resort Fee: \$16.99 per room, per night
Group Name: LA Municipal Association 2025
Convention
Reservation Cut-Off: Saturday, June 28, 2025

L'Auberge Casino Resort

777 Avenue L'Auberge
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(866) 580-7444
\$139.99 Flat Rate
Resort Fee: \$15.99 per room, per night
Group Code: SLMA25
Enter group code above in the 'Offer Code' section.

La Quinta Hawthorn

400 Arena Rd., Bldg 2
Sulphur, LA 70665
(377) 287-9675
\$119.00/Single
\$129.00/Double
Reservation Cut-Off: Saturday, June 28, 2025

Springhill Suites by Marriott

1551 West Prien Lake Rd.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 474-1112
\$159.00/Single
\$149.00/Double

Staybridge Suites

1100 West Prien Lake Rd.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 477-7474
\$139.00/King Studio Suite
\$149.00/1-Bedroom King
\$159.00/1-Bedroom Dbl Queen

The Marco Hotel

401 N. Lakeshore Dr.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 439-2444

\$114.00/Single & Double
\$129.00/Kitchenette/Double
Group Name: LA Municipal Association 2025
Convention

Tru by Hilton Lake Charles

1220 W. Prien Lake Rd.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 564-6878
\$139.00 Flat Rate

Wingate by Wyndham Lake Charles

1731 W. Prien Lake Rd.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 502-5112
\$119.00 Flat Rate
Group Code: 072825LAM

Wingate by Wyndham Sulphur

300 Arena Rd.
Sulphur, LA 70665
(337) 527-5151
\$105.00 - \$115.00/Single/Double
Group Name: Louisiana Municipal
Association Convention

Details: Questions regarding the hotel reservation procedure should be referred to LMA Events Director, Nikki Samrow, nsamrow@lma.org (225) 344-5001, (800) 234-8274





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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Welcome, Members & Guests of the Louisiana Municipal Association

GREETINGS!

The cities of Lake Charles, Sulphur, Westlake, DeQuincy, Iowa and Vinton are honored to host the 2025 Louisiana Municipal Association State Convention, July 29-31, 2025. Mayors Danahay, McMillin, Smith, Watkins, Bahnsen and the team at Visit Lake Charles have joined me and our team here at the City of Lake Charles in planning and coordinating your three day visit. We want to ensure that you have an unforgettable experience in our prosperous and unique corner of the state.

The Lake Charles Event Center will again be the site for your convention and if you attended in 2018, you will notice many new upgrades since your last visit. It is located directly on the sparkling Lake Charles next to our beautiful lakefront Promenade, Marina, and our unique 9-11 Memorial. At the Event Center complex, visit the extraordinary Millennium Park, built solely by area volunteers. Travel a little to the north and stop by our recently expanded Veterans Memorial Park, commemorating all branches of the United States Armed Services and home to the official Louisiana Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Round out your visit to our lakefront with a stroll around the boardwalk to the north shore where you can enjoy a meal at Crying Eagle Lakefront and a stop into Port Wonder, home of the Children's Museum and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Science and Nature Center.

During your stay with us, we will have the opportunity to discuss issues and ideas for improvements to our communities, allowing them to be even more responsive to the needs and wishes of our citizens. I know that the sessions will be both encouraging and productive.

When you visit Southwest Louisiana, be prepared to sail, ski, swim, sunbathe, game, ride in horse drawn carriages, play golf, pickleball, tennis or beach volleyball, crab and fish, dine on fine foods, and soak in the friendliness of our people and the southern hospitality so prevalent in our area. We are working to make this a convention that you will long remember.

With sincere regards,

Marshall J. Simien, Jr.
Mayor
City of Lake Charles



Prayer Breakfast

"FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP IN PUBLIC SERVICE"

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, 8:15 AM - 9:30 AM, COLISEUM 1ST FLOOR

Public service can be a rewarding path, but it can also feel isolating. Too often, relationships are built on what you can do for others, not who you truly are.

At this year's Prayer Breakfast, Central Mayor Wade Evans and East Baton Rouge Mayor President Sid Edwards will share a powerful conversation on the importance of faith and authentic friendship. They'll offer reflections and practical tips for staying grounded in your values while serving your community.

The Invocation and Spiritual Charge will given by Reverend D.B. Thompson, Diocese of Lake Charles. And enjoy the uplifting sounds of "William Clement and Friends," whose music will lift your spirits and set the tone for a meaningful morning.

Start your day with connection, inspiration, and a reminder of what really matters.

Sponsored by



Central Mayor Wade Evans and
East Baton Rouge Mayor President
Sid Edwards



Rev. D.B. Thompson William Clement

Marking Milestones



The Path to the LMA's
100th Anniversary

By Charlotte Smith

As we approach the centennial milestone of the Louisiana Municipal Association in 2026, this period presents a unique opportunity to look back on a century of growth, collaboration, and community advancement within Louisiana's municipalities by reflecting on the foundational efforts, pivotal moments, and dedicated individuals who have shaped the LMA's legacy over the years.

Throughout its history, the LMA has served as a unifying voice for mayors and municipal leaders across the state, fostering relationships that have strengthened local governance and community well-being. From early initiatives aimed at promoting civic responsibility to efforts enabling cities and towns to adapt to changing times, each chapter reveals a story of resilience, innovation, and shared purpose.

This reflection not only honors our past but also sets the stage for continued progression. Join me as we embark on a journey through key milestones, memorable moments, and inspiring leaders, all having contributed to the organization's enduring success, guiding Louisiana's local governments toward a brighter future.

LMA Record Membership

A total of 215 municipal corporations of a possible 227 in the state are now affiliated with the Louisiana Municipal Association.

Mayor Clyde Fant of Shreveport, LMA president, said he expected 100% membership before the end of the year.

The LMA's executive offices are in Baton Rouge. Its public relations office is in Alexan-

dria, where its official publication, the Louisiana Municipal Review, is edited and published.

-Morning Advocate,
Baton Rouge, July 23,
1953, p. 2

LMA Supports 'Southwide' Conference

The executive board of the Louisiana Municipal Association unanimously approved plans for a "Southwide" meeting here of city officials from 10 other Southern states.

The purpose of the meeting will be to plan for a conference to draw national attention to the South's opposition to proposed federal aid for education.

Three LMA members were appointed to invite city officials from other states to attend the meeting in Baton Rouge. They were Mayor W.L. "Jack" Howard of Monroe, Mayor-President Jack Christian

of Baton Rouge, and Mayor Clyde Fant of Shreveport.

Fant said that, if the conference is "a progressive one, with a positive program, then it will be good. But if it's a conference that's just against something – then it will be bad."

-Morning Advocate,
Baton Rouge, June
30, 1961, p. 32

UPDATE: On July 7, 1961, a total of 30 mayors from 11 Southern states gathered in Baton Rouge and agreed to form a Southern Municipal Association. Most of the mayors were from the capital city of their respective states. Some want the new association to focus on segregation only, but moderates pressed for the new group to address all issues of concern to Southern municipalities.

Note: Research compiled by
Yvonne Lewis Day



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I want you to imagine looking up at the sky with me. It's a bruised purple, churning with a malevolence only those who have weathered a Louisiana hurricane can truly understand. The wind howls like a banshee, and the rain lashes down with the force of a thousand angry tears. In that moment, when the power flickers and dies, and the world outside becomes both quiet and chaotic, I want to ask you one question. It's a question that should be clawing its way to the forefront of every Louisianian's mind: Are we ready?

Last month, *Louisiana Municipal Review* Managing Editor Anita Tillman posed a question that I'm almost certain has been simmering beneath the surface of countless conversations across Louisiana's municipalities: What happens if the federal cavalry doesn't come in a time of crisis? It's a question that cuts to the core of our identity not only as a state, but also as a people forged in the crucible of relentless natural disasters.

Louisiana, a state painfully familiar with the destructive power of hurricanes, and the often agonizing uncertainties of federal

disaster relief, faces a stark reality. Tillman's question forces us to confront an unavoidable challenge: How can we, as leaders, communities, and citizens, best prepare for a future where self-reliance may be an absolute necessity?



"No state has learned about emergency preparedness the hard way like Louisiana has over the past several decades," stated Steven Swiber, Chief Resilience Officer for the Office of Governor Jeff Landry. "That's why we are the nation's leaders in resilience. If you live near the coast, it's not a question of if a major hurricane will strike; it's a question of when. We have to be ready, and it has to factor into every decision we make."

Louisiana's history is etched in weathered homes, stories passed down through generations, and in the very spirit of its people. It speaks volumes about our unwavering resilience in the face of relentless storms. From the unimaginable devastation of Katrina, which forever altered our landscape, to Hurricanes Laura, Delta, and Ida, each testing our resolve in ways we could never have predicted, we have witnessed first-





hand the catastrophic toll these events take on lives, homes, businesses, and the fabric of our communities. In the darkest moments, we've placed our hopes, and often our futures, in the steadfast promise of federal aid.

Brett Kriger, Deputy Director of Disaster Response for the Louisiana Municipal Association (LMA), sees that promise as a vital aspect of our identity.

"Louisiana's spirit forged in the wake of disasters like Katrina, Rita, Gustav, Delta, and Ida leans on the steadfast commitment to federal aid to help rebuild lives and communities."

I encourage you to read further information on this topic from Kriger on page 25.

Since 2005, Covalent Logic has been committed to strategic communication, research, and thoughtful execution. Stafford Wood, its leader, is an accredited Public Relations professional and member of the Southern Public Relations Hall of Fame. Her crisis communication experience spans hurricanes, mudslides, earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis, domestically and internationally, making her attentive to the evolving landscape of disaster management.

"What FEMA offers are resources that are unaffected," she explains. "In 2008, when Gustav came to Baton Rouge, I was on contract with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP). The entire city was disrupted, and all of us at GOHSEP were trying to handle crises at our own agencies while managing the bigger picture. FEMA's presence as unaffected federal support, as people who weren't impacted but simply there to do their jobs, was key."

FEMA has long been an indispensable partner in Louisiana's

disaster response, providing billions for infrastructure repair, housing, and emergency coordination. After Katrina in 2005, FEMA allocated over \$16 billion to Louisiana, restoring thousands of homes and critical infrastructure. During Hurricane Ida in 2021, FEMA disbursed over \$700 million in individual assistance and collaborated with state agencies to deploy resources swiftly.

However, the landscape is shifting. Federal disaster relief funding is increasingly unpredictable and subject to political negotiations, budget constraints, and competing priorities. The backlog of infrastructure repairs nationwide, and the limited and often delayed federal support, pose serious questions about long-term recovery capability.

Wood expressed concern.

"I imagine a local official with limited resources having to choose between a municipal need that is certain and unlimited like police, fire or education, and a potential need like sandbags. It's often the case that political officials will choose the former."

This means local governments may lack the immediate resources to procure necessary equipment during a crisis.

"FEMA has also been both the credit card before the disaster (with local officials feeling comfortable buying what's needed to save lives) and the checkbook afterward," Wood adds. "Imagine being a mayor who doesn't have the cash on hand to pay for sandbags and then having to watch your city flood because federal support is delayed, just because there's no tax money in the bank yet."





Political debates and disagreements further complicate timely disaster assistance. For example, relief funding for Hurricane Ida faced several delays due to Congressional gridlock. Such delays extend recovery times and place additional strain on state and local resources. Senator Bill Cassidy has been instrumental in advancing funding and emphasizes its importance.

"My job is to listen to folks in Louisiana and make sure they're heard in Washington. That includes getting the money they need to recover from hurricanes and other disasters. As long as I'm your Senator, you can count on me to do that. If you ever need my help, call."

As federal support becomes more uncertain, Louisiana's leaders must focus on building resilient, self-sufficient systems capable of withstanding future shocks. This underscores the critical need for long-term planning and diversified funding strategies. Kriger highlights this urgency:

"There's a growing uncertainty about

federal assistance, especially given the shifting political landscape. Louisiana can no longer solely rely on the federal government for its recovery needs."

The reality is clear. Louisiana's unique geography, jutting out like a vulnerable hand into the warm and turbulent waters of the Gulf, makes us an ever-present target for hurricanes. We know a storm is not a matter of if, but when. So, how prepared are our state and municipal agencies to manage the long, arduous journey of recovery if federal aid is delayed or insufficient? Do we have sustainable, long-term financial strategies in place?

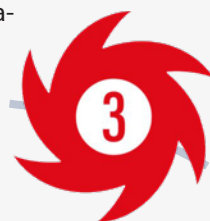
"If we have a disaster in more than one part of the state, or in two parts back to back, we will struggle without FEMA," added Wood. "It's not that we lack skills or expertise, resources already stretch thin in normal times. That's why reliance on the federal government is so crucial. Capacity and specialization matter. FEMA's working across the entire country, coordinating efforts, and providing re-

sources that local entities simply can't match alone."

Louisiana's leaders are entrusted with the safety and well-being of their communities. Part of that responsibility involves proactive preparation. That could mean strengthening building codes, implementing advanced early warning systems, and expanding community outreach to educate residents about disaster readiness. These are all solid plans, but the critical question persists. If the cavalry doesn't come, are we truly ready?

Given the relentless threat of hurricanes, resilience must become a non-negotiable priority. The lessons learned over the last two decades of storms have been tragic and instructive, and they still highlight the importance of early preparations and coordinated local responses.

"The states have always had the first





responsibility for disaster response, but federal assistance, whether called FEMA or not, remains critical," said Kriger.

Local governments need resources, proper training, and comprehensive emergency plans in order to build a solid foundation for saving lives when every second counts. They must conduct realistic drills, effectively communicate with their communities, and leverage data analytics and GIS mapping to target recovery efforts while prioritizing high-risk areas for smarter rebuilding.

Pat Forbes, Executive Director of the Louisiana Office of Community Development, explains.

"Using data analytics and GIS mapping tools, we're able to prioritize recovery efforts in high-risk areas, helping municipalities rebuild smarter and stronger with federal support." (*Data-Driven Resilience Press Release, April 8, 2025*)

But resilience ain't gonna be cheap!

"The cost of disaster preparedness may seem steep, but the price of inaction is far higher," said Kriger. "The long-term savings, both economic and human, are undeniable."

"When a disaster happens, FEMA contracts can trigger us to become webmasters, text messaging services, email alert senders, and media spokespeople as needed," added Woods. "As a business owner, I know my team can support a locality because FEMA will pay for the extra support to relieve overworked staff."

Hurricanes are a recurring reality for Louisiana, and resilience isn't just an admirable goal, it's an essential obligation. The critical question for our leaders is not if another storm strikes, it's how we will face it when it does. Will we rely solely on federal aid? Or will we build communities with the resources, knowledge, and capacity to weather any storm, regardless of federal support?

You are Louisiana's dedicated leaders. As you look toward the horizon, I encourage you to pause and recognize that things are looking a little different now. And

with that in mind, I want you to join me in one final thing. This time, instead of looking at the sky above, let's shift our view downward, to the people below. With them in mind, are you ready?

With labor. With equipment. With resources. With tools. With money. Are you ready?

Because I have to be honest, how ready "we" are depends an awful lot on your answer.



by Charlotte Smith
Editor

Smith is a Senior Communications Consultant for AMCorp International. Editor of the Louisiana Municipal Review, and Owner of Wordsmith Communications. She can be reached by emailing charlotte@teamamcorp.com, or by calling 225.650.3281.



Navigating FEMA's Uncertain Future: Lessons from Louisiana's Past and a Path to Resilience

Louisiana's towns and cities, from lively New Orleans to quiet Sulphur, face constant hurricane threats. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) says strong hurricanes (Category 3 or higher) have increased by 25% since 1980. Storms like Katrina (2005), Ike (2008), and Ida (2021) caused billions in damage and disrupted lives. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has been a big help following disasters, providing Louisiana with \$11.5 billion since 2017. But the new FEMA Act of 2025 and other changes could affect how towns prepare for and recover from disasters, especially their budgets. I'll explain what this likely means for local leaders, how it affects town budgets, and how Louisiana's past can guide us toward a stronger, fairer future.

Understanding the FEMA Act of 2025

The FEMA Act of 2025, signed into law this year, aims to make communities safer before disasters hit, ensure fairness in aid, and make FEMA work better. Here's what it does:

Pre-Disaster Funding: Towns can get approval for projects like stronger levees or better drainage before a storm hits. This means faster money when disaster strikes. In Lafourche Parish, raised homes cut flood damage by 30% after Ida, and this could help similar projects.



Flexible Building Rules:

The Act lets states set building standards that fit their risks, like hurricanes in Louisiana. Coastal towns like Terrebonne can use hurricane-proof designs without strict federal rules, saving money while staying safe.

"Custom building rules help Terrebonne build strong homes without extra costs."
– Terrebonne Parish Building Official

Help for Homeowners: The

Act supports affordable upgrades, like stronger roofs or flood barriers, especially for low-income families in places like St. Helena Parish. This lowers repair costs after storms.

Fairness and Transparency:

The Act stops potential unfair aid distribution based on politics. A new website run by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will show where disaster money goes, so we can see it for ourselves.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) will review FEMA's rules to remove outdated ones, and studies will look at fraud, identity theft, insurance, and warning systems to make things fairer.

Saving Money: The Act focuses on preparing ahead, which saves money. Experts say every dollar spent on preparation saves six dollars in repairs, helping town budgets.

How This Affects Town Budgets

The FEMA Act could save money in the long run, but there are challenges. In January 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14180, creating a FEMA Review Council, led by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Texas Emergency Management Chief W. Nim Kidd, to suggest changes by July 2025. These changes might include giving states block grants instead of direct FEMA help. FEMA also cut 200 staff members in February 2025, with more expected to leave, and canceled the \$882 million Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program. This could hurt small communities that have tight budgets.

FEMA's reimbursement process is already slow. After Ida, St. John the Baptist Parish waited six months for \$10 million, forcing them to borrow money and strain their \$20 million budget. Block grants might mean



towns pay upfront and wait longer for repayment, which could increase debt in places like Plaquemines Parish, with only \$15 million in yearly revenue. Sen. Bill Cassidy says block grants could overwhelm state budgets, leaving small or poor towns with less help. The Act's new website can help track money, but towns need to improve how they report damage.

Learning from Louisiana's Past

Looking at past storms shows how the FEMA Act could help or hurt.

Hurricane Katrina (2005): FEMA gave \$6.1 billion but was slow, especially in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward. Early funding could have fixed levees faster, saving money. Block grants and fewer staff might have made things worse, increasing costs for debris cleanup.

Hurricane Ike (2008): FEMA's \$1.4 billion helped Cameron Parish rebuild. Flexible building rules could have sped things up, but losing BRIC would have stopped future projects, raising local costs.

Hurricane Ida (2021): FEMA's \$3.7 billion restored power quickly in Lafourche Parish. Early funding could have grown programs like raised homes, but less federal help might slow recovery and increase borrowing.

Steps to Stay Strong and Save Money

Towns can anticipate the Act's benefits and prepare for challenges with these steps:

Talk to Congress: Contact Louisiana's Legislative and Congressional leaders and Push to restore BRIC funding and more FEMA staff. Explain how delays hurt budgets.

Find New Funding: Create a state fund, like the Texas' \$1.7 billion Disaster Relief Fund, using partnerships

or bonds. Expand programs like Louisiana Strong for storm resistant homes to help cut future repair costs.

Protect Nature: Support the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's \$50 billion plan to restore wetlands, which reduce storm surges by 20% per mile of coast. This lowers damage and repair costs.

Moving Forward

The FEMA Act of 2025 gives Louisiana tools to prepare better, set fair rules, and better track money. But with possible block grants this summer, staff cuts, and no BRIC, (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) towns should expect less direct involvement by FEMA. By talking to Congress, finding new funds, building on local successes, protecting nature, and planning together,

Louisiana can save money and recover.

From New Orleans' spirit to the close-knit communities of Ouachita Parish, our strength is in our people. Our communities are our power. Planning ahead keeps us strong. Let's build a future where every town thrives, no matter what storms come.



by Brett Kriger

LMA Deputy Director of Disaster Response

Brett Kriger is LMA Deputy Director of Disaster Response. He can be reached by emailing bkriger@lma.org.



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By Charlotte Smith

Each year, our annual convention offers a prime opportunity for state, regional, and local leaders to connect, collaborate, and celebrate the progress and resilience of our great state. This year, Lake Charles is our host, and they're set to add to the excitement by highlighting the unique culture, vibrant attractions, and unwavering spirit of Southwest Louisiana.

But what exactly does the host city do? Well, I decided to reach out to Lake Charles City Administrator John Cardone to find out for all of us. And believe you me – it's a lot!

What is the planning timeline like for hosting the LMA annual conference?

The City of Lake Charles was notified of its selection as the 2025 host city in the summer of 2024. Mayor Nic Hunter accepted the invitation to host, and initial planning efforts soon got underway. Working with the team at Visit Lake Charles, leads were sent out to secure the hotel room blocks, and the space was booked at the Lake Charles Event Center (the host site for the convention activities.)

Hosting LMA is not just a Lake Charles event. It is an event for all of Calcasieu Parish to hang its hat on, so we quickly engaged our other neighboring municipalities, and a steering committee was formed. Planning a convention with the size and notoriety of LMA's Annual Convention requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. With representatives from Lake Charles, Visit Lake Charles, Sulphur, Westlake, DeQuincy, Vinton, and Iowa, planning officially got underway with our first meeting being held in September 2024.

How does the city coordinate with the LMA leadership and staff during the planning process?

Lake Charles Gears Up to Host 88th Annual Convention



The steering committee remains in regular contact with LMA leadership and staff. In fact, when the convention is coming to town, it is like a reunion of old friends. With the planning process lasting at least a year, relationships and bonds are formed between members of the steering committee and LMA staff. These relationships are valuable not just at convention planning time, but throughout the year as the LMA works to carry out its very important mission of advocating on behalf of Louisiana's more than 300 municipal members.

What types of venues or facilities does the city typically offer or prepare for the conference?

The bulk of convention activities take place at the Lake Charles Event Center. It is always a sight to see when LMA members arrive in Lake Charles, and the entire Event Center complex is transformed into a venue conducive to learning, networking, and celebration. Local gaming properties, museums, galleries, and restaurants host delegates and events like the Host City Reception. Overflows are booked at other nearby hotels throughout the parish, generating significant economic impact and showcasing local attractions.

How does the city ensure that local infrastructure can handle the influx of visitors?

The City of Lake Charles is well equipped to handle the influx of visitors. With experience organizing major events like Mardi Gras, city staff, law enforcement, and public works personnel work seamlessly to ensure a safe and enjoyable visit. Collaboration among neighboring municipalities helps facilitate smooth transportation, signage, and security arrangements.

Can you share any standout moments or surprises from the upcoming Host City Party, or is it a surprise?



Southwest Louisiana, branded as Louisiana's Playground by Visit Lake Charles, always has something fun and exciting happening. The Host City Reception will feature lively music and regional flavors, along with networking opportunities and surprises that delegates will remember.

How do you incorporate the city's unique culture, history, or cuisine into the Host City Reception and overall conference experience?

Often referred to as the Festival Capital of Louisiana, the steering committee works to incorporate regional festivals' flavor into the event. The menu will highlight local cuisine, and delegates will have the opportunity to learn about the area's rich cultural experiences.

What kind of economic or community impact does hosting the LMA conference typically have for your city?

Hosting the Louisiana Municipal Association Convention in Southwest Louisiana is projected to generate an estimated economic impact of \$900,000. Beyond the financial benefits, the event offers a platform for the region to showcase its attractions, culinary scene, and community resilience, inspiring attendees to explore more of what Lake Charles and Southwest Louisiana have to offer.

Do local residents or organizations get involved in the planning or execution of the event?

Absolutely! We solicit volunteers from civic organizations, high school groups, fraternities, sororities, and service clubs.



Former Mayor Nic Hunter

As former Mayor Nic Hunter notes, "Hosting LMA's annual convention is a prestigious honor, and absolutely an opportunity to educate attendees about our area's innovative programs and successes. Lake Charles and Southwest Louisiana look drastically different than they did when delegates were last here in 2018. We cannot welcome guests without acknowledging the challenges our community faced in 2020 and 2021, but we are proud to showcase the progress made since, and LMA's 2025 Annual Convention will be an amazing opportunity for the incoming mayoral adminis-

tration to showcase their vision for what is still to come."

What top attractions or hidden gems would you recommend to conference attendees?

There's so much to experience! Among the highlights are Port Wonder with its Children's Museum and Nature & Science Center; Bespoke Hat Company for custom millinery; Crying Eagle Brewing Company for craft brews and live music; The Wine Store and Bodega Wine Dive for tastings; and the Creole Nature Trail, a stunning All-American Road showcasing Louisiana's natural beauty.

For the final question, let's get incoming Mayor Marshal J. Simien's take, as he'll be in office as we come to town.

If you had one sentence that welcomed everyone to Lake Charles while encapsulating the city's vibe, what would it be?

It is truly an honor to kick off our next chapter by welcoming the Louisiana Municipal Association to Lake Charles where southern charm



Mayor Marshal J. Simien

meets bold vision, and the spirit of ONE Lake Charles offers the promise of bringing people, progress and possibilities together.

As Lake Charles prepares to host this very important gathering of our membership, the city's rich culture, resilient spirit, and warm hospitality will shine brightly.

We look forward to seeing you all there, and we hope you join us as we visit Louisiana's Playground; a place where community, culture, and opportunities come alive.



Strolling Through Sunset: A Walkable Vision for Rural Louisiana

Nestled in the heart of St. Landry Parish, the town of Sunset is full of small-town charm. With just over 3,000 residents, its streets are lined with antique shops, bursts of vibrant flora, and the unmistakable rhythm of a place where everyone knows your name. It's the kind of town where festivals bring neighbors together and where a walk down Napoleon Avenue feels like stepping back into a simpler, more connected time.



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With crosswalks and curb extensions marked with tape and painted to feature Sunset's own logo and colors, the project provided residents and visitors with a vibrant, safe space to walk and gather.

Placemaking through paint and plants offered an experiential glimpse into what long-term change could look like.

The benefits are clear. Just 20–30 minutes of daily walking can reduce obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular issues - chronic conditions that affect many in Louisiana. Meanwhile, more walkable streets reduce isolation by fostering social connection and greater civic engagement.

Even small improvements can have big impacts. Sunset's creative, community-driven approach offers a replicable model for towns across Louisiana. Demonstration projects don't just change streets - they change minds. They help people experience their community in a new way.



**by Jessica
McKelvie
Kemp, PhD**
CPEX

Jessica Kemp, Center for Planning Excellence Vice President. She can be reached by emailing jkemp@cpex.org

But like many rural towns, Sunset faces modern challenges. Sidewalks are discontinuous, curb ramps are missing at some intersections, and wide, continuous driveways create unpredictable paths for pedestrians. Steady traffic - just over 10,000 vehicles a day - without signalized crossings makes the main street difficult and unsafe to cross, especially for older adults and those using mobility devices. A road meant to connect had become a barrier.

That began to change in 2023 when town leaders joined the Walkability Action Institute, a four-day program led by Well-Ahead Louisiana (the Chronic Disease Prevention and Healthcare Access arm of the Louisiana Department of Health), Center for Planning Excellence, and the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors. The institute brought together multisector teams—planners, engineers, health professionals, and elected officials—to explore how health outcomes can improve through active transportation and street design. More importantly, it built relationships across sectors to leverage opportunities like road overlays to implement walkable design.

After the Walkability Institute, Sunset developed a corridor vision for its main thoroughfare. It turned to CPEX, who led the project in partnership with Mayor Charles James, the Acadiana Planning Commission, and the rest of the Walkability Action team. Through input gained during walk audits, a community open house, and interviews, the team was able to identify key locations for crosswalks and sidewalks. The plan reimaged the corridor and surrounding streets with traffic calming, placemaking, and landscaping to create a safer, connected, and walkable environment.

CPEX brought its Complete Streets expertise to Sunset through a creative, community-led demonstration during the Sunset Herb and Garden Festival. With temporary crosswalks, curb extensions, and colorful street art, we helped transform key intersections along Napoleon Avenue. The project showed Complete Streets aren't just for cities - they're a practical, flexible tool rural communities can use to create safer, more welcoming spaces that engage residents and visitors and drive economic activity.

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Deploying Cybersecurity Statewide: From Policy to Practice

As cyber threats continue to evolve at an unprecedented pace, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) has a division called **Cyber and Emerging Threats (CET)** that is rising to the challenge with a strategic, three-pronged approach. Comprising the Office of Cyber Readiness, the Cyber Threat Analysis Center, and the Cyber Incident Response Team, the division delivers a comprehensive defense strategy that blends proactive cyber assessments, real-time threat monitoring, and rapid incident response. Working collaboratively, these teams operate in a dynamic and resource-conscious environment, safeguarding critical infrastructure while maximizing impact on a structured budget.

In an effort to bolster the digital resilience of public and private Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources (CIKR), including municipalities, the **Office of Cyber Readiness (OCR)** is now offering a no-cost service that provides agencies with a comprehensive external cyber hygiene assessment. Using a suite of advanced tools, the department conducts scans from an external perspective, simulating how a threat actor might probe the organization's digital perimeter. The resulting report identifies potential vulnerabilities and provides actionable recommendations aimed at improving the agency's overall cyber hygiene.

This initiative is designed to help organizations better understand their exposure to cyber threats and take proactive steps to safeguard sensitive data and digital infrastructure. All agencies are encouraged to take advantage of the service. Assessing from the outside in, the goal is to show agencies how they appear to potential attackers and provide meaningful, tailored guidance that supports stronger security postures across the board. Agencies interested in participating in an assessment can scan

the QR code or visit the link at the end of the article to make the request and for more information.

The **Cyber Threat Analysis Center (CTAC)** is ramping up efforts to protect CIKR by serving as a central hub for threat intelligence analysis, network monitoring, and response across the state. The CTAC monitors and identifies emerging cyber threats, tracks trends, and transforms threat intelligence into actionable insights. Intelligence is shared via multiple communication channels, including structured threat information eXpression (STIX) and trusted automated exchange of intelligence information (TAXII) feeds. These findings are regularly shared with partner agencies and stakeholders, allowing for a coordinated and proactive state defense against cyberattacks.

In addition to intelligence sharing, the CTAC offers all agencies no cost managed detection and response (MDR) services through security operations center (SOC) services via security information and event management (SIEM), security orchestration and automated response (SOAR), Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR), powerful tools that provide real-time monitoring, threat detection, and rapid response capabilities to safeguard systems and data. Agencies are encouraged to engage with the CTAC by scanning the QR code or visiting the link at the end of the article to take advantage of these vital services and contribute to a more secure digital environment statewide.

When a cyber incident strikes, the **Incident Response Team (IRT)** is ready to act. As a rapid deployment unit, the IRT is specifically designed to assist public and private



CIKR agencies that have been compromised by cyber threats, ensuring swift and effective recovery. The team follows a structured process to manage incidents, beginning with identifying and classifying the threat. From there, the IRT moves quickly to contain and eradicate the issue, minimizing potential damage and preventing further spread.

Once the threat is neutralized, the IRT works closely with the affected agency to restore systems in a secure and stable posture. This ensures a safe return to normal operations while strengthening defenses to prevent future incidents. The priority is to support agencies in crisis and get them back online safely. Cyber threats are evolving, and GOHSEP is ready to respond and help organizations recover with resilience. The IRT's services are available to all government agencies and critical infrastructure, providing a pivotal layer of protection and peace of mind in an increasingly complex digital landscape.

For more information and to request LCAP services, please scan the QR Code, or click on the following link, <https://forms.office.com/g/YzD8n1xjEq>.

Please report all cyber incidents to the Louisiana State Analytical and Fusion Exchange at 1-800-434-8007, and visit <https://getagameplan.org/make-a-plan/cybersecurity-plan/>.



**By Nick
Cutrera**

**Cyber and Emerging
Threats -
Operations Manager
GOHSEP**

Cutrera serves as the Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) Cyber and Emerging Threats Operations Manager. He can be reached by emailing Nick.Cutrera@la.gov.





Parks & Rec Day at the Capitol

From the Capitol to the lawn of the Pentagon Barracks Courtyard, Parks & Rec Day on June 3 was a celebration of energy, connection, and community spirit.

Inside the Capitol, agencies, and organizations from across Louisiana proudly showcased their programs and services. Elected officials, park professionals, and supporters came together to share ideas and highlight the critical role parks and recreation play in our communities.

The Louisiana Recreation and Park Association (LRPA) was front and center, advocating for the important work happening in com-





munities big and small, and reminding legislators just how critical their support is to keep these parks running strong.

And the celebration didn't stop there! Attendees enjoyed delicious food, warm conversations, and plenty of laughs. As evening rolled in, the courtyard came alive with friendly competition during beanbag baseball, giving everyone a chance to relax and enjoy some recreation of their own.

Thank you to everyone who joined us! This day was a powerful reminder of how parks and recreation help build healthier, stronger, and more connected communities.



By Suzanne Diez

LRPA Executive Director

Diez is the Executive Director of the Louisiana Recreation and Park Association. She can be reached by emailing sdiez@lma.org

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