



## I-10: Ten Things to Know in New Orleans this Week (March 28, 2017)

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### 1. GOP health care plan YANKED BEFORE vote

Just minutes before U.S. House Republicans pulled the GOP-backed American Health Care Act — the legislation that would repeal the Affordable Care Act — Louisiana Rep. Ralph Abraham was on the House floor, urging his fellow Republicans to get behind the bill. He and Louisiana Reps. Steve Scalise (pictured) and Clay Higgins were expected to vote yes on the bill, while Reps. Mike Johnson and Garret Graves' votes were still in doubt. (Louisiana's sole Democratic House member, Rep. Cedric Richmond, was, unsurprisingly, in the "no" camp.)

Scalise, the House Majority Whip, had spent days trying to solidify the Republicans behind the bill, but by the time the vote was to be taken, it was clear that not enough of them were on board. Nevertheless, White House press secretary Sean Spicer, insisted, "Mr. Scalise has done a phenomenal job."

On the Senate side, Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy — who had pushed his own "Patient Freedom Act" — tweeted at Trump: "Mr President, Cassidy-Collins is still an option to fulfill your promise to repeal and replace Obamacare," Cassidy wrote. "Let's team up."

Nevertheless, there was plenty of finger-pointing. Abraham blamed the House "Freedom Caucus," a group of conservative

lawmakers, for "sinking" the bill. As for President Donald Trump, he told the press he blamed Democrats, not Ryan and House Republicans, for the defeat.

## 2. Quote of the week

"Sort of a cross between Socrates and Dirty Harry. I believe Judge Gorsuch is that person." — *U.S. Sen. John Neely Kennedy, at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the nomination of Neil Gorsuch to the U.S. Supreme Court.*

If the comparison sounded familiar, it was because Kennedy used it in 2015 — referring to then-gubernatorial candidate David Vitter. "I think at this juncture in Louisiana history," Kennedy told *The Advocate*, "we need a governor who is a cross between Socrates and Dirty Harry."

## 3. Internet privacy rules in danger

Nearly lost in last week's uproar surrounding the vote on the GOP's proposed American Health Care Act was passage of another bill that alarmed privacy advocates. The U.S. Senate voted 50-48 to do away with internet privacy rules put in place in the last weeks of President Barack Obama's administration. Those rules required internet service providers to ask explicit permission to share customers' individual web-browsing histories to advertisers. Last week's vote would use the Congressional Review Act to dismantle those rules, which would allow internet providers to collect and sell browsing data to private companies.

The vote passed the U.S. Senate along party lines; Louisiana Sens. Bill Cassidy and John Neely Kennedy both voted to overturn the privacy rules. The legislation now heads to the U.S. House.

## 4. Bayou Bridge Pipeline panel April 6

Members of Louisiana environmental groups will participate in a panel on the proposed Bayou Bridge Pipeline in April. Panelists at a teach-in at Tulane University's Hebert Hall include members of the Sierra Club, United Houma Nation, Louisiana Bucket Brigade and Gulf Restoration Network. The panel is 5 p.m. Thursday, April 6.

The \$670 million pipeline will run more than 160 miles to Texas through 11 parishes and more than 900 miles of Louisiana's wetlands. It also will run through eight watersheds. Environmental groups have pressed the state's Department of Environmental Quality to halt permits to the project, which must also win the support of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The pipeline is a project of Energy Transfer Partners, which also is building the controversial Dakota Access Pipeline.

## 5. You'll pay more for false alarms

In 2015, the New Orleans City Council updated a decades-old policy relating to how the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) responds to false alarms, and new fines will be enforced beginning May 1. The first alarm will receive a warning, and subsequent false alarms will be assessed against the property owner with fines of \$75 and \$150 for the second and third occurrences. A fourth offense will see NOPD response to alarms curtailed until the problem is fixed.

According to statistics provided by NOPD, in 2016 the department dispatched officers to respond to 40,096 alarms — and 98 percent were false alarms. Eric Melancon, an NOPD deputy chief of staff, stressed that the new policy would not affect 911 emergency calls, fire reports or "panic alarm incidents."

## 6. Landrieu: City will focus on violent crime, not "enforcing civil immigration laws"

Mayor Mitch Landrieu stands by New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) policy, following a federal report that puts New Orleans on a list of U.S. cities that "limit cooperation" with immigration authorities.

"NOPD does now and will continue to follow federal laws and focus on arresting people who commit crime, regardless of

their immigration status," Landrieu said in a March 21 statement. "The NOPD's policy on immigration complies with federal law and makes New Orleans safer because individuals are more likely to report crime, and victims and witnesses can testify without fear of being questioned about their immigration status. That's why the NOPD will continue to focus on arresting those who commit violent crimes, not enforcing civil immigration laws."

The first weekly report from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) puts New Orleans on a list of cities "that have enacted policies which limit cooperation" with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The report notes that NOPD "will not honor [a] detainer without a judicial order or criminal warrant." But Landrieu says ICE supported NOPD when the police department drafted its immigration policy as part of the consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice. The report is part of President Donald Trump's executive orders on immigration from January. Trump threatened to cut federal funding from cities with so-called "sanctuary" policies, as determined by the DHS and the Attorney General.

## **7. Council votes unanimously to demolish Canal Street ferry landing**

The New Orleans City Council voted unanimously March 23 to demolish the aging ferry landing on Canal Street despite objections from riders, advocacy groups and commuters. The City Council was satisfied with city officials' promise of a pedestrian bridge — which is not in the current plans for the new ferry terminal. Demolition is expected to begin this summer.

The city secured federal grants for a new terminal in 2015 and 2016, but residents say they were excluded from the design process until it was revealed earlier this year. "The lack of a pedestrian bridge will lead to missed connections for transit riders when they are stuck behind a train with no way to cross, and could create dangerous situations as riders try to hurry through ahead of an oncoming train," a statement from Ride New Orleans said.

Also an issue: why the area between the terminal and the ferry itself is open to the elements in a city prone to heat, humidity and torrential downpours. "This will make people less likely to take transit," Ride New Orleans noted.

## **8. Projection: Louisiana wage gap won't close for 98 years**

According to projections released last week by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, a nonprofit research group in Washington D.C., the wage gap for women in Louisiana won't close until the year 2115. If the report is accurate, Louisiana joins just three other states — North Dakota, Utah and Wyoming — in failing to close the gap until the 22nd century. The group's analysis considered the ratio of women's to men's earnings for full-time workers and how that ratio has changed over time since 1959.

City and state officials often discuss the pay equity problem statewide and recently have made efforts to address it. The New Orleans City Council established an Equal Pay Advisory Committee and Mayor Mitch Landrieu called for a Civil Service Commission study about gender disparity on its own payroll. In Baton Rouge, Gov. John Bel Edwards and Donna Edwards also hosted a summit earlier this month about pay equity.

Equal pay bills have been brought up — and shot down — for years in the Louisiana Legislature. State Sen. JP Morrell, D-New Orleans, plans to introduce an equal pay bill again when lawmakers convene April 10.

## **9. Jazz Fest schedule and 'cubes' to be announced March 28**

The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival announced last week that the fest's full schedule — aka "the cubes" — would be released March 28. That should give Festheads plenty of time to plot their schedules to see (or avoid) Stevie Wonder, Tom Petty, Dave Matthews, Widespread Panic and the rest of the headliners, as well as local acts, book signings, musical discussions and, of course, crawfish bread. This year's Jazz Fest will take place at Fair Grounds Race Course & Slots April 28-30 and May 4-7.

## 10. Bike-share meetings start this week

New Orleans' test bike-sharing program is set to end this month, but a permanent program should begin in the fall. Beginning this week, city officials will hold community meetings in various neighborhoods to determine the best places to install the first 70 bike stations. All meetings begin at 6:30 p.m.

- Monday, March 27: Marigny, Bywater, St. Roch: Stallings St. Claude Recreation Center (4300 St. Claude Ave.)
- Wednesday, March 29: Treme, 7th Ward, Esplanade Ridge: Corpus Christi-Epiphany Community Resource Center Cafeteria (2022 St Bernard Ave.)
- Monday, April 3: Mid-City, Bayou St. John: First Grace United Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall (3401 Canal St.)
- Wednesday, April 5: Lower Garden District, Central City: Peoples Health New Orleans Jazz Market (1436 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.)
- Monday, April 10: CBD, Warehouse District: Hyatt Regency, fourth floor, Imperial 5 Meeting Room (601 Loyola Ave.)
- Tuesday, April 11: French Quarter: The Historic New Orleans Collection (Williams Research Library Auditorium, 410 Chartres St.).

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