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### LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS UPDATE

Through much work and compromise, the Legislature approved a budget that funds our highest priorities, including health care, education at all levels, social services, public safety and the TOPS scholarship program. TOPS is a promise to students that if they work hard in high school and take challenging courses, the state will help them pay for college. We have kept that promise.

An almost \$1 billion "fiscal cliff" caused by the expiration of a temporary 1-cent sales tax June 30, was avoided in a third special session by utilizing funds from improvement in some revenue sources, implementing some cuts, lifting some tax exemptions, injecting Deepwater Horizon settlement funds, and agreeing to a compromise renewing for another seven years, just under half of the expiring sales tax. The compromise split the difference between 0.4 and 0.5 of a cent.

While balancing revenues and spending was the hottest topic of the legislative season, we also addressed numerous other issues in the four legislative sessions.

Louisiana taxpayers soon will have a clearer view of how the state spends its money. Legislation implementing the "Louisiana Checkbook" calls for creating a user-friendly website showing all kinds of state expenditures, contracts, payroll, boards and commissions actions, state debt, incentives granted to industries, and dedicated revenues.

The state's popular START program that established tax-free savings accounts to hold deposits for paying college expenses was expanded to create the START K-12 program for pre-college expenses.

In the Max Gruver Act, penalties for hazing were greatly strengthened following the death of the LSU student. Additionally, reacting to reports of abuse in nursing homes, we approved legislation allowing family members to install cameras and monitoring devices in their loved ones' rooms.

On November 6, voters will decide on six constitutional amendments including whether or not to require unanimous jury decisions for felony convictions. If approved, it would alter the Code of Criminal Procedure and align Louisiana more closely with the procedures of other states.

To address a growing crisis around our country, sexual harassment legislation was also passed. Agency heads are now required to develop and institute critical policy changes, including mandatory training so state employees will know that harassment is not acceptable.

I consider it a pleasure and honor to represent you at the Capitol in Baton Rouge. Please contact me if you have concerns about things in our district and our state. Your input is important to me as we work together to build a stronger Louisiana.