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**Thursday, July 19, 2007**  
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## **PUT COASTAL RESTORATION AHEAD OF PORK SPENDING**

**BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA**—Republicans, along with our constituents, understand that coastal restoration is a primary concern in our state.

With a \$29.7 billion budget, Governor Blanco chose not to make something as critical as our barrier islands a priority in her budget. Instead, the Governor and her Administration dubiously tied the sale of the remainder of Louisiana's tobacco settlement money to the funding of coastal restoration. This plan is strongly opposed by Treasurer John Kennedy, most Republican lawmakers, many Democratic legislators, and Louisiana taxpayers. Selling the remainder of this settlement in this unfavorable financial climate is simply bad finance—the state would give up steady income in exchange for an upfront lump sum of cash.

If the Administration is really serious about saving our coast, barrier island funding should have been a priority in her budget.

Nevertheless, Governor Blanco has chosen to put politics ahead of priorities. The budget includes \$62.3 million of state tax dollars to fund projects such as social clubs, alumni associations, festivals, unknown charities, civic organizations, non-governmental entities, and local governments instead of addressing the real issue of our vanishing coast.

Further the Governor saw fit to use taxpayer dollars to fund boat ramps, picnic tables, metal buildings, radio programs, and athletic facilities across the state. The restoration of our barrier islands is a critical component of Louisiana's hurricane protection defense. This state money should have been used for real priorities.

"Coastal restoration is the Number 1 issue facing Louisiana's environment," stated State Representative Gordon Dove, R-Houma. "It is fiscally irresponsible that we would waste the taxpayers' money on such irrelevant and unnecessary items like those above when our fragile ecosystems are being destroyed everyday."

Republicans insist that any additional revenues recognized this fiscal year by the Revenue Estimating Conference first be dedicated to the Barrier Island Stabilization and Preservation Fund in a like amount of the Governor's irrational funding plan.

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