



Urban League of
Louisiana

THE FIGHT FOR LOUISIANA'S FUTURE

2026 Legislative
Agenda Recap





Urban League of Louisiana

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2026

✓ FOR A SAFE LOUISIANA
✓ FOR A STRONG LOUISIANA
✓ FOR A SMART LOUISIANA

Dear Louisiana,

This legislative session reminded us of two enduring truths: progress is never permanent, and our power cannot be diminished when we move together with purpose.

To our partners, advocates, organizers, faith leaders, business leaders, elected officials, volunteers, and community members across Louisiana — thank you. Thank you for your advocacy, your testimony, your calls and emails, your organizing, your research, your partnership, and most importantly, your unwavering belief that Louisiana can and must become more just, more equitable, and more responsive to all of its people.

While this session produced legislation that will deepen challenges facing many communities across our state, it also reaffirmed something equally important: there remains a growing coalition of Louisianans committed to protecting democracy, expanding opportunity, advancing economic mobility, defending civil rights, and ensuring that every person has the opportunity not only to survive, but to thrive.

The work before us now cannot end with the adjournment of session. In many ways, it is only beginning.

The Urban League of Louisiana believes this moment calls for deeper organizing, broader coalition building, sharper strategy, and sustained collective action. We must continue building power together — in our neighborhoods, in our schools, in our faith institutions, in our businesses, and at every level of government. We must remain united not only in principle, but in practice and in deed.

Together, we must work to mitigate the harmful impacts of legislation that threatens equity, representation, economic security, and access to opportunity. At the same time, we must continue advancing and implementing the positive measures that can strengthen families, expand pathways to prosperity, and move Louisiana closer to its full potential.

We are under no illusion that this work will be easy.

The Urban League of Louisiana remains fully committed to that work and to all of you who continue to stand in the gap for our communities every single day.

The future of Louisiana is still being written. Let us write it together.



Judy Reese Morse
PRESIDENT & CEO



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Reflections from the Policy & Social Justice Team

The coordinated attacks on Black political power, voting rights, and democratic participation this legislative session are no longer subtle in Louisiana — they are open, aggressive, and accelerating.

From the Governor's Mansion, to the Louisiana Legislature, to the Louisiana Supreme Court, and ultimately the United States Supreme Court, we witnessed a dangerous and deeply coordinated effort to weaken the political voice of Black Louisianans and communities fighting for equity, fairness, representation, and opportunity.

This session made painfully clear that the struggle for democracy in Louisiana is not theoretical. It is immediate. It is active. And it is unfolding in real time through legislation, litigation, judicial decisions, and deliberate political strategy.

Louisiana's legislature has:

- Passed a politically gerrymandered 5-1 congressional map designed to dilute the growing political influence of Black voters and communities of color;
- Undermined public trust in our democratic institutions and weakened critical voting protections;
- Continued efforts to erode local control and self-governance in New Orleans;
- Advanced policies rooted more in political division than public good;
- Refused to meaningfully advance policies that strengthen wages, healthcare access, housing stability, educational opportunity, and economic mobility for working families.

These are not isolated incidents. They are connected.

They reflect a broader effort to silence communities demanding fairness, accountability, investment, and equal participation in Louisiana's future. They are designed to create barriers to civic participation, discourage public engagement, and weaken the collective power of communities that have long fought to make this state more just, inclusive, and equitable.

What we witnessed this session was not ordinary political disagreement. It was a sustained effort to reshape who holds power in Louisiana.

Through court rulings and legislative action, Black political power and democratic participation were treated not as values to be protected, but as obstacles to be contained. The consequences of those decisions will not only be measured in maps or legislation, but in whether communities are able to meaningfully shape the policies that govern their lives.

We have been honored to stand shoulder to shoulder with residents and our many partners throughout this fight — not asking for special treatment, not asking for favors, but demanding the freedoms, protections, representation, and dignity that communities are owed under the Constitution and under law.

We will continue to educate, organize, advocate, and mobilize communities across this state. We will continue fighting for a Louisiana where democracy is protected, where every vote is valued, and where Black communities and all historically marginalized people are able to fully thrive.



Charles E.J. Phipps

VICE PRESIDENT, POLICY,
ADVOCACY & LEGAL AFFAIRS



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The Urban League of Louisiana entered this legislative session guided by a simple but urgent framework:

SAFE LOUISIANA.

A Safe Louisiana protects democracy, civil rights, public health, and the dignity of its people.

STRONG LOUISIANA.

A Strong Louisiana invests in workers, families, housing, healthcare, and pathways to wealth creation.

SMART LOUISIANA.

A Smart Louisiana expands educational opportunity, workforce development, civic participation, and evidence-based policymaking.

This framework is more than a slogan.

It is our strategy for Louisiana's future.



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Building a STRONG Louisiana

A Strong Louisiana invests in workers, families, homeownership, food access, second chances, and pathways to economic mobility. This session showed both the promise of what is possible when policy is rooted in people — and the harm caused when the Legislature refuses to confront poverty, low wages, housing instability, and racial wealth gaps.

HB 1194 — FOOD FOR FAMILIES ACT

Rep. Terry Landry

Status: Pending Governor's Signature

This is a win for Louisiana families. The Food for Families Act advances a more coordinated approach to identifying and addressing food deserts across the state. For Black, low-income, and rural communities that have long been denied consistent access to affordable, nutritious food, this bill recognizes food access as an economic justice issue, a public health issue, and a family stability issue.

HB 1073 / HB 167 — CITIZENS WORK ACT

Rep. Terry Landry / Rep. Barbara Freiberg

Status: Pending Governor's Signature

This is a meaningful step toward a stronger workforce and fairer economy. The Citizens Work Act recognizes that people returning home from incarceration deserve real pathways to employment, dignity, and self-sufficiency. Removing barriers to work strengthens families, reduces recidivism, and supports safer communities.



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SB 596 / HB 1133 / SR 168 — DREAM STARTER ACT

Sen. Sidney Barthelemy / Rep. Dana Henry

Status: Senate Resolution passed; pending Secretary of State's approval

The Dream Starter Act is a win for wealth-building policy in Louisiana. By focusing on first-generation homeownership, this resolution addresses one of the clearest drivers of the racial wealth gap: unequal access to property ownership. For Black families historically excluded from fair lending, appraisal equity, and generational wealth transfers, this effort begins the work of building a more equitable homeownership pipeline.

HB 209 — FAIR PAY ACT

Rep. Delisha Boyd

Status: Failed in House Labor Committee on 4/9/26

The failure of this bill is a failure to meet the reality facing working families. Raising wages is one of the most direct ways to strengthen households, reduce poverty, and support local economies. By refusing to advance this bill, the Legislature left too many Louisiana workers — disproportionately Black workers and women — trapped in an economy where full-time work still does not guarantee stability.

HB 668 — PARTITION OF PROPERTY

Rep. Nicholas Muscarello

Status: Voluntarily Deferred in House Civil Law & Procedure Committee on 4/22/26

The deferral of this bill leaves unresolved a major threat to family wealth. Heirs' property and partition issues have contributed to generations of Black land loss across Louisiana and the South. Without stronger protections, families remain vulnerable to forced sales, fractured ownership, and the erosion of intergenerational assets.

HB 211 — HOMELESSNESS BILL

Rep. Debbie Villio

Status: Pending Governor's Signature

This bill is harmful because it criminalizes poverty instead of solving it. Experiencing homelessness should not be treated as a crime. Louisiana needs housing, behavioral health services, employment supports, and prevention strategies — not policies that punish people for being poor, displaced, or unsupported.



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HB 214 — CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: BLIGHTED PROPERTY REHABILITATION

Rep. Chance Henry

Status: Signed by Secretary of State; assigned ACT 272

This amendment could support neighborhood revitalization if implemented equitably. Rehabilitating blighted properties can strengthen communities, expand housing opportunities, and return vacant properties to productive use. However, implementation must guard against displacement and ensure benefits reach longtime residents, not only developers and investors.

HB 521 — CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: LOCAL MILLAGE AUTHORITY

Rep. Wilder

Status: Pending Secretary of State's Signature

This measure deserves close public attention. Local taxing authority directly affects schools, infrastructure, public services, and municipal stability. Any change to millage authority must be evaluated by whether it protects communities' ability to fund essential services without creating inequitable tax burdens.

SB 180 — CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: VETERAN PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION TRANSFER

Sen. Franklin Foil

Status: Signed by Secretary of State; assigned ACT 39

This measure may provide meaningful relief for surviving spouses of disabled veterans. Property tax stability can help families remain in their homes and preserve household wealth after the death of a loved one.



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Defending a SAFE Louisiana

A Safe Louisiana protects democracy, voting rights, civil rights, public health, local governance, and the dignity of every resident. This session made clear that safety cannot be reduced to punishment and control. A truly safe Louisiana must protect people's rights, their votes, their health, and their ability to be heard.

URBAN LEAGUE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA BILLS

HB 361 — VOTING RIGHTS RESTORATION

Rep. Terry Landry

Status: Failed in House & Governmental Affairs Committee on 4/1/26

The failure of this bill is a loss for democracy. Restoring and expanding voting access for returning citizens strengthens civic participation and affirms that people who live, work, pay taxes, and raise families in Louisiana deserve a voice in shaping its future.



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SB 365 — LOUISIANA VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Sen. Royce Duplessis

Status: Failed in Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee on 4/8/26

The defeat of the Louisiana Voting Rights Act is one of the clearest examples of the Legislature's refusal to protect Black political power. At a moment when courts and lawmakers are weakening voting protections, Louisiana had an opportunity to lead. Instead, the Legislature failed to advance a bill that would have helped protect voters from suppression, dilution, and discrimination.

HB 611 — PREGNANCY CENTER LICENSING

Rep. Aimee Adatto Freeman

Status: Failed in Health & Welfare Committee on 4/14/26

The failure of this bill leaves families without needed transparency and accountability. Residents seeking pregnancy-related services deserve accurate information, clear standards, and protection from misleading practices. This is especially important for Black women and families, who already face disproportionate maternal health risks.

SB 35 — "DON LEMON LAW" / DISTURBING THE PEACE AT PLACES OF WORSHIP

Sen. Bill Wheat

Status: Withdrawn from the files of the Senate

The withdrawal of this bill was appropriate. Louisiana should be careful not to expand criminal law in ways that chill speech, invite selective enforcement, or disproportionately impact Black residents and protest movements.

HB 911 — ORLEANS PARISH COURT RESTRUCTURING

Rep. Dixon McMakin

Status: Placed on the Subject to Call List for House Final Passage

This proposal raises serious concerns about local control and democratic accountability in Orleans Parish. Court restructuring should not be used to dilute the voice of residents or override local decision-making in majority-Black communities.



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HB 691 — LOUISIANA SAVE ACT

Rep. Beau Beaulieu

Status: Signed by Governor; assigned ACT 6

This law is harmful because it adds new restrictions to the voting process at a time when Louisiana should be expanding access. Measures that make voting more burdensome often fall hardest on Black voters, elderly voters, low-income voters, students, and residents with limited transportation or documentation access.

SB 197 / SB 217 / SB 256 — NEW ORLEANS GOVERNANCE CHANGES

Sen. Jay Morris

Status: SB 197 and SB 217 pending Governor's Signature; SB 256 signed by Governor and assigned ACT 15

These bills are part of a broader and dangerous pattern of state interference in New Orleans governance. When state leaders override or restructure local authority in majority-Black communities, they weaken local democracy and undermine residents' ability to govern themselves.

HB 926 — LIMITS PUBLIC HEALTH PROTECTIONS

Rep. Mike Bayham

Status: Pending scheduling for Senate Health & Welfare Committee

This bill is harmful because it limits the state's ability to respond to public health emergencies. Communities with fewer healthcare resources — including Black, low-income, elderly, and rural residents — are often hit hardest when public health systems are weakened.

SB 319 — ATTACKS ON VOTING RIGHTS

Sen. Thomas Pressley

Status: Pending Governor's Signature

This bill is dangerous because it tightens voter identification rules and removes the affidavit option for voters confirming their identity at the polls. These changes risk turning eligible voters away from the ballot box and disproportionately burden voters who already face barriers to participation.



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HB 51 — CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: POST-CONVICTION BAIL

Rep. Debbie Villio

Status: Signed by Secretary of State; assigned ACT 271

This amendment should be closely reviewed by voters. While protecting children is a shared priority, constitutional amendments that restrict judicial discretion must be examined carefully to ensure they are fair, necessary, and not overly broad.

HB 68 / SB 306 — WORSHIP-RELATED CRIMINAL PENALTIES

Rep. Laurie Schlegel / Sen. Rick Edmonds

Status: HB 68 signed by Governor and assigned ACT 115; SB 306 signed by Governor and assigned ACT 379

These laws raise concerns about expanding criminal penalties in ways that may chill protected expression or be enforced unevenly. Louisiana should protect houses of worship while also safeguarding constitutional rights and avoiding unnecessary overcriminalization.

SB 68 — CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: SUPREME COURT DISCIPLINE OF OUT-OF-STATE ATTORNEYS

Sen. Jay Morris

Status: Signed by Secretary of State; assigned ACT 38

This amendment deserves public scrutiny. Any expansion of disciplinary authority should be evaluated for fairness, due process, and whether it could be used to chill legal advocacy, especially in civil rights and voting rights matters.



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The Attack on Black Political Power

This session cannot be understood separately from the broader political moment unfolding across Louisiana and the nation.

Following the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Louisiana v. Callais* and recent Louisiana Supreme Court rulings impacting elections and representation, this Legislature continued advancing policies that weaken Black political influence and democratic accountability.

SB 197 / SB 217 / SB 256 — NEW ORLEANS GOVERNANCE CHANGES

Sen. Jay Morris

- SB 197 — Pending Governor's Signature
- SB 217 — Pending Governor's Signature
- SB 256 — Signed Into Law (ACT 15)

These bills continue a troubling pattern of state interference in local governance and democratic decision-making in majority-Black communities.

Combined with extreme congressional maps and continued efforts to dilute voting power, the message from state leadership has become increasingly clear:

- consolidate power, silence opposition, and weaken representation.

We must answer with clarity, discipline, and sustained civic engagement.



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Investing in a SMART Louisiana

A Smart Louisiana expands educational opportunity, workforce development, student support, evidence-based policy, and long-term investment in people. This session showed that Louisiana still has work to do to prioritize students, educators, workers, and families over political messaging and short-term thinking.

URBAN LEAGUE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA BILLS

HR 175 — SKILLS & PAYCHECKS ACT

Rep. Ed Larvadain

Status: Not run at the recommendation of the Louisiana Board of Regents

Although this resolution did not move forward, its purpose remains urgent. Louisiana needs stronger alignment between education, workforce training, and good-paying jobs. A smart economy requires more than job openings; it requires clear pathways for residents to gain skills, credentials, and wages that support families.



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HCR 119 — COLLEGE WITHOUT DEBT COMMISSION

Rep. Ed Murray

Status: Failed on the House Floor

The failure of this resolution was a missed opportunity. Student debt continues to delay homeownership, entrepreneurship, family stability, and wealth-building. A commission focused on college affordability would have helped Louisiana study practical solutions to expand opportunity without saddling students with lifelong debt.

SB 157 — PAID PARENTAL LEAVE FOR EDUCATORS

Sen. Samuel Jenkins

Status: Scheduled for House Appropriations on 5/26/26

This bill is a smart investment in educators, families, and workforce retention. Paid parental leave helps schools retain talented teachers and support staff while allowing families to care for newborns without immediate financial hardship.

HB 269 — FREE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Rep. Kyle Green

Status: Has not been scheduled for House Education Committee

This bill is a direct investment in student success. Hunger undermines learning, attendance, health, and classroom performance. Providing breakfast helps ensure children are ready to learn, especially in communities where food insecurity is highest.

HB 325 — EXPANDED TOPS TECH ACCESS

Rep. Ken Brass

Status: Pending Governor's Signature

This is a win for workforce development and educational access. Expanding TOPS Tech helps more students pursue technical training and credentials that connect directly to employment opportunities and economic mobility.



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HB 385 — TOPS SCHOLARSHIP REPAYMENT REQUIREMENT

Rep. Dennis Bamberg

Status: Failed House Final Passage

The failure of this bill was a positive outcome. Requiring repayment from certain TOPS recipients would have risked turning a scholarship into a debt trap. Louisiana should remove barriers to college completion, not create new financial penalties for students pursuing opportunity.

SB 269 — “CHARLIE KIRK SUCCESS SEQUENCING ACT”

Sen. Rick Edmonds

Status: Placed on the Subject to Call List for Senate Final Passage

This bill raises serious concerns about politicizing education. Students deserve honest, complete, and evidence-based instruction — not curriculum mandates designed to advance partisan narratives or oversimplify the realities facing families.

Senate & Governmental Affairs HB691 BY BEAULLIEU



Sen. Kleinpeter



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Rep. Larvadain

Constitutional Amendments to Watch

Several constitutional amendments approved this session will appear before voters statewide and deserve careful public review.

These amendments address issues including:

- Property tax policy
- Bail restrictions
- Governance authority
- Utility infrastructure
- Executive term limits
- Veteran property exemptions

An informed electorate remains essential to protecting democratic accountability in Louisiana.



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HB 192 — CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: FOREIGN ADVERSARY PROPERTY EXPROPRIATION

Rep. Charles Owen

Status: Signed by Secretary of State; assigned ACT 277

This amendment should be reviewed carefully by voters to ensure its language is clear, fair, and not vulnerable to discriminatory or overly broad application.

HB 225 — CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: GOVERNOR TERM LIMITS

Rep. Mike Bayham

Status: Signed by Secretary of State; assigned ACT 414

This amendment will require voters to consider how Louisiana balances executive accountability, voter choice, and long-term governance stability.

SB 228 — CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT

Sen. Royce Duplessis

Status: Pending Secretary of State's Signature

This is an important public health and infrastructure measure. Allowing public funds to help identify and replace lead-affected service lines can protect children, families, and communities from long-term health harms — especially in older neighborhoods where infrastructure risks are greatest.



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The Work Ahead

This legislative session reaffirmed an uncomfortable truth: Louisiana is at a crossroads.

One path leads toward division, disenfranchisement, concentrated political power, and continued disinvestment in communities.

The other path leads toward a safer, stronger, smarter Louisiana that works for all of its people.

The Urban League of Louisiana remains committed to building that future through advocacy, coalition-building, voter education, policy development, and civic engagement.

We believe:

- Safe communities require justice and democratic participation.
- Strong communities require economic opportunity and investment.
- Smart communities require education, truth, and informed leadership.

This work will require discipline. It will require partnership. And it will require sustained participation from all of us.

The future of Louisiana will not be shaped solely inside legislative chambers or courtrooms.

It will be shaped by people willing to stay engaged, stay informed, and stay committed to building the Louisiana we deserve.

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