Cassidy leads premium relief

Thanks to the efforts of Congressmen Bill Cassidy and other members of our state delegation, the U.S. House of Representatives has approved a major flood insurance reform legislation. The legislation, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, includes long-term reforms that would help make flood insurance affordable for families in northeast Louisiana. The legislation builds upon the Cassidy Amendment, which became law in January. The amendment will delay rate hikes caused in part by the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act for thousands of Louisiana families through at least October 2015. It is the first step in keeping flood insurance rates affordable.

The next step is the legislation currently being considered by the House. Thanks to Cassid
dy, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act includes a provision to completely rein- state grandfathered flood insur-
ance and county risk factor phased out programs in northeast Louisiana families that built their homes to existing building codes would be protected from future rate hikes under this legislation. This language also includes other critical reforms. It removes the home sale trigger, so the buyers of homes in flood-prone areas with a grandfathered rate will keep that rate. It also allows homeowners to pay their flood premium on a monthly basis instead of one large payment. It is budget-neutral and does not add to our deficit. Thanks to Cassid
dy, this legislation helps North-
east Louisiana tremendously. I want to thank. Cassidy for his leadership on flood insur-
ance and urge Governor Jindal to support this critical legislation. These long-term flood insur-
ance reforms matter for our community.

Lois Hawes

Landrieu would scare unborn

Recently, Gov. Bobby Jindal came to Monroe to help promote pro-life legislation. It is in contrast to the position of Sen. Mary Landrieu, who has been an opponent of the abortion movement.

Since Roe v. Wade in 1973, 55 million unborn babies have been destroyed through abortion in Louisiana, for the third straight year, as we are at the peak of an unprecedented surge in the pro-life state in the union as Sen. Landrieu will discover in November.

If you see a pregnant woman, the unborn baby would be scared to death of Sen. Landrieu because she would let the moth-
er hire a medical doctor to kill the unborn baby. Sen. Landrieu is a member of the Catholic Church, but she ignores the moral teaching of her church and sides with the democrats on this issue. She obviously places politics above of party. Pro-life people in Louisiana are looking forward to the Nov-
ember election as a chance to elect a new senator and protect unborn children.

Jack Wright Jr.

In Ukraine, Putin one-ups Obama

When Walter Duranty was caught covering up for Stalin’s murder of 30-50 million Ukrainians, he never took his Pulitzer Prize away from him. Prior to the breaking the story of the suffering of the workers and the media and your government ignored the evidence of the Massac-

ations Ukrainians held in front of the White House. John McCain and others have recently tried to get us into War World III over Syria, and now McCain, George Soros and the American media have helped to oust the legally elect-

ed president of Ukraine. Anyone who knows anything about the Monroe Doctrine and our interference with govern-
mint should support this. It is a half century old law.

Are we involved in the War World III? In recent years, though, sunlight has been doused. Some Congressmen and govern-
ment agencies and lawmakers who fear disclosure and seek to allow greater secrecy.

We see a state government that is transparent in some cases, quite power-ful in others. Among them number-1 News-Star’s editorial board, composed of President and Publisher David B. Petty, Executive Editor Kathy Spurlock and community representatives Lionel Crowell, Nancy Ingrassia and Jay Mann.

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Submitted MFP not BESE-approved

Department of Education makes 'technical edit' before sending to lawmakers

By Barbara Leader
bleader@thenewsstar.com

Part of the public schools funding formula submitted to the Legislature by the Louisiana Department of Education may not have been approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

In an email written to BESE by its executive director, Heath Cope, and obtained Wednesday by The News-Star, Cope tells members there have been changes made by the Department of Education to the MFP document approved by them on March 13.

The MFP is the state’s minimum foundation program, which funds public education on a per-pupil basis. Local school officials around the state have argued that in recent years the MFP has not been fully funded by the state.

See BESE, Page 5A
ELECTIONS

Judge supports Arizona and Kansas in voter citizenship suit

Ruling: Federal officials must modify registration form
By John Hanna

**NEW YORK—**It’s called the chicken from hell; a bird that stood only about five feet tall that weighed around 500 pounds when it roamed Western North America on its long, slender legs.

The beast got its nick-name from a paper published in the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, where a replica of its skeleton is on display for a decade. But the species has had its day. The skeleton will be on display until May.

The creature was formally introduced to the scientific community Wednesday as scientists published a description and analysis of the fossil. It was found in western Montana, and finally bestowed the name of its body. The discovery reflects “a very low level of trust” in government and business, especially in phar-...
Sunshine Week informs the public of their legal right to know

By Barbara Leader
bleader@thenewsstar.com

Many citizens who are legally entitled to have access to the records of public bodies have no idea what records are available for public viewing or how to obtain those records.

Sunshine Week, March 16-21, is a national initiative to emphasize the importance of open government and freedom of information and to help inform the public of their rights in regard to public records.

Louisiana’s public records laws allow anyone age 18 or older to ask the keeper of the records for any public body to provide the records for any public body to provide

Federal
- Campaign finance reports
- Federal levee inspections
- Environmental impact studies
- Firearms regulations
- Federal court records
- Consumer product recalls
- Airline ontime statistics
- List of federally subsidized rental housing
- Aviation safety reports
- Bank deposit data by institution

Parish
- Marriage records
- Building permits
- Subdivision restrictions
- Court case documents
- Tax assessor records (value, owner, etc.)
- Registered voters (party, frequency, demographics, etc.)
- Animal shelter statistics
- Mosquito abatement chemical use
- Meeting minutes
- Properties for sheriff’s sales

Municipal
- Police incident reports
- Cellphone records
- Meetings
- Meeting agendas
- Grant applications
- Building permits
- Franchise agreements (cable TV, etc.)
- Zoo animal inventory

State
- Corporations database
- Elections (results, dates, etc.)
- Bridge inspections
- Restaurant inspections
- State university budgets
- Nursing home inspections
- Economic incentive contracts
- School performance scores
- State university sports revenue
- Contracts

Schools
- Building plans
- Free- or reduced-lunch student populations
- Salaries
- Meeting minutes
- Graduation rates
- Budgets
- Percentage of certified teachers
- Contracts
- Zoning maps
- Transportation safety records

Jindal budget sure to be amended

By Mike Hasten
mhasten@gannett.com

BATON ROUGE — Members of the House Appropriations Committee say they have many concerns about Gov. Bobby Jindal’s proposed budget for fiscal 2014-15 but one thing is certain: It won’t look the same when they’re finished with it.

The Jindal administration has proposed a nearly $27 billion budget for the new fiscal year beginning July 1. Much of it is federal funding that legislators have little control over and some of the state funding can’t be touched because of constitutional dedications adopted over the years.

But some of the money that can be touched is likely to be shifted to different priorities than the governor picked, lawmakers said in interviews.

“There’s sure to be juggling in priorities,” said Rep. Jim Fannin, R-Jonesboro, the chairman of the House committee that gets the first crack at altering the governor’s spending plans.

See BUDGET, Page 6A
**Budget**

Continued from Page 1A

there’s a good bit of room for juggling.

The committee is just beginning its work on the details.

“I think we have to get back to funding those few items — the ones that will require evidence from computers, questions that are related on from consolidat-

ing IT services will pro-

duce some savings, and other areas that we are concerned about.”

“IT budget is reduced again and they’re depend-

ing on a 3% cut in IT for reduc-

tion. I’m not sure that it will be accounting for to account for the re-

ductions they’re making.”

The plan could fall short. “If that’s the case, we want them to account for that. We just have to see how different departments of state government explain the savings.”

Rep. Henry Burns, R-Haughton, said at first sight, “as it comes from the administration, how things look good and bal-

anced.” But when the committee starts digging into the budget, it finds things that are not quite as rosy.

“IT evolves, we’ll get a better feel for it,” he said. “Retirement, the school funds — looking for more dollars and we see there are other needs.”

Hishammuddin Hussein said, adding that the num-

ber, a beginning point. It’s like “taking $50 million and dividing it by three years.”

The search for those efficiencies is going to be a lot of work to be done. The committee starts digging into the budget, the Senate will act according-

ly because “we’ve grown tired of voting with one day to make any revi-

sions” to the Senate ver-

sion.

Rep. Brett Greymann, R-Monroe, said and he others in a group known as “fiscal hawks” have two major concerns about the way the budgets are presented.

It takes $50 million from the Moral Conven-

tion Center in New Or-

leans and plans to replace it with funding through the budget with plans to nancing the payback over several years.

Greymann said that’s like “taking $50 million out of your checking ac-

count and repaying it with $5 million in capital out-

lay over three years. That’s not a financially sound practice.”

The ACARS system is putting sur-

plus money and fund-

ning needed into the coastal restoration trust fund, both legitimate uses of money, Armes said they taking the same amount of money out of the fund to balance the budget.

“Essentially what they’re doing is turning non-recurring money into recur-

ring funds,” Greymann said. “It’s not the in-

tent for that money to be turned into operating funds. They tried it be-

fore” but the Legislature rejected it.

Rep. James Armes, D-De-

Leesville, said he’s con-

vinced that the adminis-

tration is taking money from the Office of Group Benefits fund and using it to balance the budget and “tuck everything out of el-

derly affairs. That’s not right.”

You rob Group Benefits and premiums from employees.

“All they’re doing is to rob Peter to pay Paul,” he said. “And Paul won’t have anything left,” he said. “I don’t think the budget’s going to go at all like it is.”

Armes said the state doesn’t have enough mon-

ey to provide needed ser-

vices and if he had his way, “we’d take a look at all those tax cred-

its we’re giving to big business. The small busi-

nesses aren’t getting any.”

Armes said the gover-

nor is responsible for the “poor condition.”

“I don’t like him, but when he comes to the state as a whole, he’s sold us down the river. In a few years, we’ll be bankrupt and he’ll be gone.”

**Sunshine**

Continued from Page 1A

any public record. Those records can include the minutes of meetings, school boards, city coun-

cil or the payroll from city hall. Those records are available.

Certain types of employee personnel files, may be prevented from disclosure by pri-

vacy laws.

**Plane**

Continued from Page 1A

serted and may have flown over India’s vast reaches of the Indian Ocean.

Authorities have said someone aboard the plane first disabled one of its communications sy-

tems — the Aircraft and Communica-

tion System, or ACARS — about 40 minutes after takeoff. The ACARS equipment sends infor-

mation about the jet’s en-

gines and other data to the airliner.

Armed 14 minutes lat-
	er, the transponder that identifes the plane to commercial radar sys-

tems was also shut down. The fact that both sys-

tems went dark separate-

ly offered strong evi-

dence that the plane’s dis-

appearance was deliber-

ate.

On Sunday, Malaysian Defense Minister Hish-

ammuddin Hussein said a the conference of the final, reassuringly he said, “All right, all good,” — were spoken to air traffic controllers after ACARS system was shut off. Whoever was there did not mention any trouble with the jet.

Airforce Maj. Gen. Af-

far said ACARSuld re-

hears did not know whether it was the pilot or co-pilot who spoke to air traffic controllers.

**Search effort**

Given the expanse of land and water that might need to be searched, find-

ing the wreckage could take months or longer. Or it might never be located.

Establishing what happens with any degree of certainty will probably require evidence from
cockpit voice recordings and the plane’s flight-data recorders.

The search area now including the plane might have flown over 13 countries, said, adding that the num-

ber of countries involved in the search increased from 14 to 25.

The search was already a highly complex, multinational effort, said. “It has now become even more difficult.”

The search effort ini-

itally focused on the rela-

tively shallow waters of the South China Sea and the Malacca Strait, where the plane was first though to be. Hisham-

muddin said he had been told that there was sensitive radar and satel-

lite data to try to get a bet-

ter idea of the plane’s final movements.

With more informa-

tion, he said, the search zone could be narrowed “to an area that is more feasible.”

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**Sunrise**

Continued from Page 1A

“As it evolves, we’ll get a better feel for it,” he said. “Retirement, the school funds — looking for more dollars and we see there are other needs.”

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