



# LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## Report to the Citizens of District 71

Representing your interest in the Louisiana House of Representatives continues to be a welcomed challenge and a rewarding privilege. I appreciate your vote of confidence as I continue to serve as your voice in Baton Rouge.

Again this year, legislators were faced with the challenge of adopting an operating budget that is balanced as required by the state constitution. We were able to balance the budget but again only with the use of one time money. I devoted my attention and efforts to making responsible cuts and stretching every dollar to protect vital services such as education and healthcare.

In addition to the budget, we passed legislation to increase K-12 funding, ban smoking near state-owned buildings, elementary or secondary schools, further impede human trafficking and other sex crimes and added exceptions to the crime of illegal possession of a firearm. We were also able to provide a Cost of Living increase for all state retirees.

### **We continue to secure funding for important road improvements for safety and to ease traffic congestion. The following roads in our area have been approved for funding:**

- Funding for four-lanes Juban Road from Highway 190 to I-12
- Improvements at Eden Church Road and Highway 190
- A study for improvements at Lockhart Road and Cockerham Road intersection
- I-12 to Satsuma widening to six lanes is approved and under construction
- Highway 1032 at Highway 190 to LA 16 to widen and overlay
- Highway 447 at Southfork Elementary for turn lanes for school traffic
- Highway 447 and I-12 improvements for traffic flow and safety
- A study to widen Hwy 447 from I-12 to Buddy Ellis Road
- A study to improve LA16 from Magnolia Beach Bridge to LA 16
- A study to improve Highway 190 from Denham Springs to Livingston
- A study to improve safety and traffic flow at the Literacy Center on Highway 190 in Walker

As your elected state representative, I will continue to push for improvements to our local roads and I-12 to improve safety and travel time.

## 2014 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

### EDUCATION

I opposed the implementation of national Common Core State Standards and related assessments. There have been many states that have withdrawn from this national initiative.

I supported legislation that requires the Department of Education to develop and implement a statewide educational technology plan for public schools.

I supported legislation that expands the coverage of the TOPS-Tech Early Start program to allow this award to fund certain technical and applied courses at public and non-public postsecondary institutions.

I supported changes in the Minimum Foundation Program for K-12 public schools which increased funding and made teacher salary increases a permanent part of the MFP formula.

I supported increased funding for higher education.

### HEALTH

I opposed the expansion of the Affordable Care Act. Several pieces of legislation were filed in attempt to expand the Affordable Care Act coverage in Louisiana but none were successful.

I supported legislation that prohibits the use of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cards being used at liquor stores, gaming establishments, lottery tickets, adult entertainment, adult bookstores, tattoos and piercings, tobacco products, nail salons, jewelry stores, amusement rides and attractions, bail bond companies, bars, cruise ships and psychics.

I supported legislation to enhance services for the Elderly and Councils on Aging.

I supported legislation that restricts Human Trafficking.

I supported legislation that prohibits abortion clinics and their employees or representatives from presenting any instruction, program or material to any public elementary or secondary school that receives state funding.

I opposed legislation that attempts to expand abortion activity in Louisiana.

I authored legislation that will allow optometrists after additional training to perform certain ophthalmic surgery procedures. The authorized surgeries include three types of laser treatments, but exclude LASIK, PRK and other forms of refractive surgery. This is important as there are many areas of the state, especially in rural areas, that do not have the benefit of ophthalmologists.

### CRIME

I supported legislation that strengthens our domestic violence laws.

I supported legislation that increases the jail time for distribution of heroin from 50 to 99 years for multiple offenses.

### RETIREMENT

I supported legislation that helps pay down the unfunded accrued liability of the four state retirement systems.

I supported legislation that provides a Cost of Living raise starting July 1, 2014 for all state employee retirement systems.

### MILITARY

I supported legislation that expands protections for members of the military and their spouses, making it easier to terminate a house or apartment lease for those members injured and hospitalized incidental to his service.

I supported legislation that designates the seventh day of August each year as (Purple Heart Recognition Day).

### INSURANCE

I supported legislation that extends the time a Louisiana driver's license remains valid from 4 to 6 years.

### AWARDS

**2014 Statesman of the Year for outstanding service to Optometry** from the Optometry Association of Louisiana.

**2014 Southwest Louisiana Chamber Legis Gator Business Champion.**

### BUDGET/COST OF GOVERNMENT

I opposed the use of one time money to balance the state budget. Currently the FY 14-15 budget, coupled with continuation budget requirements, will likely result in a FY 15-16 anticipated funding shortage in excess of 991 million dollars according to the Legislative Fiscal Office. There was an increase of 447 million dollars in spending from state general fund. We must address this out of control spending now rather than later as we all know who will pay for the growing indebtedness.

I voted NO on the general appropriations bill as I oppose the continuing increase in spending and not addressing the growing debt. The state budget is artificially balanced using one time money on recurring expenses. We can do better and we must.

*I will continue to be a voice of fiscal responsibility in the state legislature. We will continue next legislative session to address the reduction of spending and the size of state government. We can do better and we must. I look forward to continue to serve you in the State Legislature and welcome your comments and recommendations as we continue to work together to improve Livingston Parish and Louisiana.*

*Please do not hesitate to contact me regarding issues that affect Livingston Parish or Louisiana. I always welcome your comments and thank you for expressing your concerns and recommendations. My email address is [poper@legis.la.gov](mailto:poper@legis.la.gov) and my website is [www.jrogerspope.com](http://www.jrogerspope.com).*



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