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## **Regents Laud House Approval of Tuition Bill**

Yesterday's passage of House Bill 734 is critically important to maintaining the quality of Louisiana's public colleges and universities, according to the Louisiana Board of Regents. The bill provides legislative authorization for system management boards to allow public colleges and universities to adjust tuition from 3% to 5% per year in each of the next four years. The resulting revenue will help public colleges and universities avoid falling farther behind their peer institutions in the southern region. Louisiana's tuition rates are among the lowest in the nation, and Louisiana is the *only* state to require a supermajority (two-thirds) of the legislature to increase tuition.

"Public colleges and universities have two primary sources of revenue: state appropriations and self-generated funds, which are primarily tuition," said Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "Last year our campuses received full formula funding for the first time in a generation, but it's important to keep in mind that that increase only brought state funding up to the southern regional *average* for state appropriations, and tuition revenue is still low and critical to our institutions' ability to serve Louisiana's students."

While the tuition bill passed by the House is certainly good news for Louisiana's public colleges and universities, its positive impact stands to be wiped out by a variety of significant tax cuts the Legislature is considering this session.

"We're of course encouraged by the passage of HB 734, but the fact is that a range of proposed tax revenue cuts still under consideration this session could put our institutions once again in very real danger of future budget cuts," Savoie said.

All told, tax revenue cuts and new dedications of revenue being considered by the Legislature during the current session could reduce state general funds by nearly \$545 million by fiscal year 2010-11. Since public higher education is one of the major budget areas *not* protected from budget cuts, if this full reduction is realized, funding for Louisiana colleges and universities could be reduced by an estimated \$170 million.

“We hope the members of the Legislature will carefully consider the potentially negative impact of these tax-revenue cuts, both on our institutions *and* our students, before voting for all these revenue reductions,” Savoie said.

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