



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

For more information, contact  
Chassity McComack  
985-359-9777

**Statewide Business Community Creates  
Higher Education Reform Coalition**  
*Over thirty organizations collectively say  
higher education key to Louisiana's economic future*

**BATON ROUGE, La. (February 10, 2010)** –The River Region Chamber of Commerce announced last week the creation of a statewide coalition of business organizations focused on strategic higher education reforms designed to ensure that Louisiana develops a robust economic foundation. Forming under the acronym BILD: Higher Education, which stands for Businesses for Improving Louisiana's Development, over thirty business entities representing all areas of the state have come together to advocate for improvements in a higher education system that is in extreme crisis. BILD: Higher Education announced its formation and platform at a press conference last week in Baton Rouge.

"Having a prepared workforce is critical to the success of businesses in the River Region. Higher education reforms are needed to ensure that we have the resources available to attract and retain business. The River Region Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to working diligently in preparing for the future needs of our region", said Chamber Chair Rhonda Hotard.

BILD: Higher Education said that its platform consisted of four strategic reforms. Those include:

- Implementing the Louisiana Board of Regents-proposed performance-funding formula
- Raising admission standards at four-year institutions
- Granting sole authority to adjust self-generated revenue to the system's management boards
- Establishing "centers of excellence" at Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) campuses and eliminating unproductive and duplicative programs

The coalition said that it welcomes other business groups that wish to partner on these reform goals. Next steps for the coalition will include garnering legislative support for a BILD: Higher Education legislative package, as well as working in partnership with the Louisiana Board of Regents, the college and universities themselves, and other higher education interests.

At the time of its announcement, BILD: Higher Education partners included:

Acadiana Economic Development Council  
Ascension Chamber of Commerce  
Baton Rouge Area Chamber  
Blueprint Louisiana  
Bossier Chamber of Commerce  
Business Council of New Orleans & the River Region  
Cenla Advantage Partnership  
Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce  
Council for a Better Louisiana  
East Feliciana Economic Development District  
East St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce  
Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce  
Greater New Orleans, Inc.  
Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce  
Jefferson Business Council  
Jefferson Chamber of Commerce

- more -

Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission  
Lafayette Economic Development Authority  
Livingston Economic Development Council  
Louisiana Committee of 100  
Monroe Chamber of Commerce  
Northshore Business Council  
Plaquemines Association of Business and Industry  
River Region Chamber of Commerce  
Ruston-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce  
South Central Industrial Association  
South Louisiana Economic Council  
Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance  
St. Bernard Chamber of Commerce  
St. Helena Parish Office of Economic Development  
St. Tammany Healthcare Alliance  
St. Tammany West Chamber of Commerce  
Terrebonne Economic Development Authority

###