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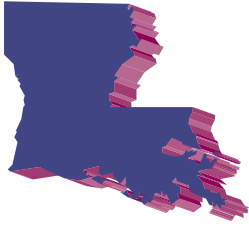
# Preface

## Toward a Better Louisiana

***“I’ve seen some progress in Louisiana I guess. But it’s been slow.”***

**–Louisiana Voter**

**From *The People’s Agenda Survey***



If tomorrow, Louisiana could become the state we all want it to be, what would it look like?

That, in essence, is a question the Council for A Better Louisiana has been asking citizens for six years, and their answers have been specific and consistent. They want a state where they don’t have to worry about the quality of education or fear they will be a victim of crime. They want better opportunities for their children, jobs that pay a good wage and the promise of a prosperous future. For this to happen they expect elected leaders to act ethically, put the state’s needs first, and focus on the things that will make Louisiana a better place to live.

The good news is that there are encouraging signs of progress. State leaders have sharpened their focus on education and begun a long overdue effort to hold our schools accountable for results. They have acknowledged the value of higher education and created a community and technical college system to better educate and train the majority of Louisiana citizens who will never earn a college degree. And they have explored new approaches for bringing quality jobs to the state.

After years of stagnation, many people believe we are finally moving in the right direction, but they also acknowledge that making Louisiana the state it should be is a work in progress. That work must continue.

With Louisiana’s national rankings so low in so many categories, we know things must change. If they don’t, too many of our citizens will continue to leave the state. More and more of our limited resources will go toward dealing with the symptoms of our problems, and our quality of life – already lagging other states in many categories – will deteriorate.

In this edition of *The People’s Agenda Report Card*, we are looking at the things citizens tell us they would like to change about Louisiana, and identifying some of the barriers that keep our state from becoming the type of place we really want it to be. As part of this effort we have developed a list of indicators which CABL will track on a regular basis – including goals to aim for. We see these indicators as important guideposts that will tell us whether Louisiana is truly making progress in critical areas – not just passing laws or devising plans that gather dust on shelves.

In a sense, this report represents the outline of what must become Louisiana’s agenda for the future. Our hope is that current and future state leaders will continue to focus on these common sense issues and make them part of *their* agenda for Louisiana. While there is no single, easy solution for any of our problems, there are many creative ideas which elected leaders should pursue.

Allowing things to stay the same cannot be an option.

## Where Do We Stand?

The only real way to know if we are moving forward is to have a good idea where we are when we start. In many ways, choosing this year as the year to begin tracking the state’s performance on a series of indicators is arbitrary. Louisiana has been working on virtually all of these issues for a number of years, and on many of them

we have made progress. At the same time, it makes sense at the beginning of a new century to start afresh and determine our vision and goals for the future. That's what CABL seeks to do with its new *People's Agenda* report card. The year 2000 finds Louisiana in an unenviable position – trailing the nation and the South in virtually all of the indicators that reflect the quality of life in our state. Some will quibble with our findings. Some will question our choice of indicators or point out that some piece of data is not current. Such is the nature of this type of study, particularly when one of the goals is to find out where we stand in relation to other states. What no one can dispute is the picture this report paints. It is the picture of a state that has not enjoyed the prosperity and growth of even our neighboring Southern states. A state that has fallen behind and needs to catch up. There is, however, a positive message to this report card and it's an important one. The fact that other states that look a lot like us have done better than us is evidence we can do better, too. It's proof that we are not fighting a lost cause. But to succeed it must become *Louisiana's* cause.

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## Louisiana Snapshot

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### Quality Education at All Levels

Quality education at every level is critical to Louisiana's future. Our quality of life as a state will improve only to the degree public education in Louisiana begins to move off the bottom. In the last few years we have done some things to move us forward, but these efforts must be sustained and new reforms enacted.

#### Selected Findings

- ❑ Roughly half the 4th- and 8th-grade students who took the LEAP 21 high stakes test in English and math in 2000 scored below the "basic" level.
- ❑ Over the last five years, 27% of Louisiana's new teachers have left public schools.
- ❑ During the 1999-2000 school year, more than a third of the "at-risk" four-year-olds in Louisiana were not being served through any public early childhood education program.

### Public Confidence in State Government

CABL has been tracking citizen attitudes toward state government and state elected leaders for six years. Since that time we have seen public trust improve, plateau and now begin to decline. Tackling Louisiana's problems will require leadership. Succeeding will require the public's confidence.

#### Selected Findings

- ❑ Fifty percent of citizens in our *People's Agenda* voter survey say the state is headed in the right direction – down from 67% in 1998.
- ❑ The grade citizens give state elected officials for their job performance declined from a "C" in 1998 to a "C-minus" in 2000.
- ❑ Seventy-six percent of the voters surveyed said the value of state services they receive for the state taxes they pay is only fair to poor.

### Safe, Vibrant Communities

A couple of years ago a national publication labeled Louisiana "the most dangerous state in the nation." We no longer have that distinction, but serious crime problems remain. Other factors impact the quality of life in our state, too, and citizens tell us they expect Louisiana to do better.

#### Selected Findings

- ❑ In 1999 Louisiana's crime rate was the fourth highest in the nation and second worst in the South.
- ❑ According to the 2000 *People's Agenda* voter survey, 86% of voters believe the quality of Louisiana's roads is only fair to poor.
- ❑ On an ascending scale of zero to 10, citizens rate the quality of life in Louisiana as 5.7 – just above average.

### Healthy Children & Families With a Future

Our children are our future and our families nurture them. While education is critical, a healthy start in life is also imperative. Unfortunately, ours is not a healthy state. Poverty is pervasive, too many children grow up in unstable family situations and hundreds of thousands of citizens live without health care coverage. If Louisiana is to move forward we must make the commitment to focus resources on the health and well-being of our citizens.

#### Selected Findings

- ❑ Louisiana's poverty rate is 19.2% – the second highest in the nation and the highest in the South.
- ❑ Nearly 45% of the births in Louisiana in 1999 were to unmarried mothers.
- ❑ Nearly a quarter of Louisiana's population – 22.5% – does not have health care coverage.

## Quality Jobs & a Strong Economy

Louisiana's citizens are leaving our state. While the South has enjoyed tremendous economic and population growth over the last several years, Louisiana has been left behind. The major reason: lack of opportunity. As we do a better job of educating and training our citizens, Louisiana must have the quality jobs that will keep them here. It is a sad irony that we spend millions of public dollars to give our brightest students a higher education, only to see many of them take their energy and potential to another state. Louisiana will never be the state we want it to be without a steady increase in good jobs that pay a good wage.

### Selected Findings

- Job growth in Louisiana from 1998 to 1999 was 1.8%. This was behind the Southern average and the national average which were both 2.2%.
- Between 1998 and 1999 Louisiana had a net outmigration of more than 19,000 residents – the greatest loss of population in the South.
- Average annual pay in Louisiana in 1998 was \$26,905. That was 32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation and 8<sup>th</sup> of the 13 Southern states.

## Our Purpose

It is not CABL's intent to simply compile another negative report on Louisiana. Such reports abound. Instead, we see this as a realistic assessment of the state of our state, reflecting the concerns of the *citizens* of our state. It is a view from within, not another judgment from without.



We hope citizens will use this report card as a tool to judge Louisiana's efforts to improve our quality of life. We hope those who consider running for state office will make it the foundation of their platforms. And we hope that in the years ahead this report card will tell a story of progress long overdue in Louisiana. If one of the messages of this report is that we have severe obstacles to overcome, a more important one is that we can do it.

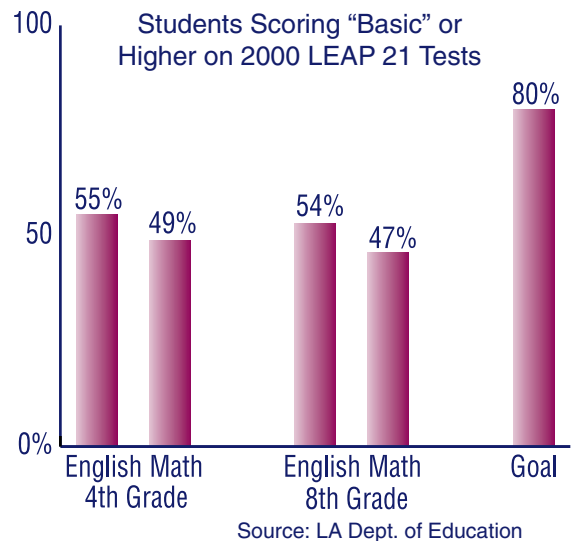
## Measuring Our Progress

### The People's Agenda Report Card

## Quality Education at All Levels

### Proficiency in English & Math

One of the greatest concerns of voters across Louisiana is the quality of public education in the state. Simply stated, citizens do not believe student achievement in Louisiana is anywhere near the level it should be. Unfortunately, there are far too many statistics, scores and studies that show these concerns are well founded. The severity of Louisiana's education problems can be seen quite clearly by looking at student performance in English and math. In 2000 about 120,000 fourth- and eighth-grade students took the state's new "high stakes" LEAP 21 tests. The results were discouraging, but they paint a realistic picture of where Louisiana's schools need to improve. The good news is that after summer school and retesting, anywhere from 77% to 91% of students passed (depending on grade and subject). The bad news is that roughly half the students who took the English and math tests failed to reach the level of "basic" – not a particularly high standard. Both of these are areas where our schools must focus resources and attention if Louisiana children are to be in a position to compete for good jobs later in life.

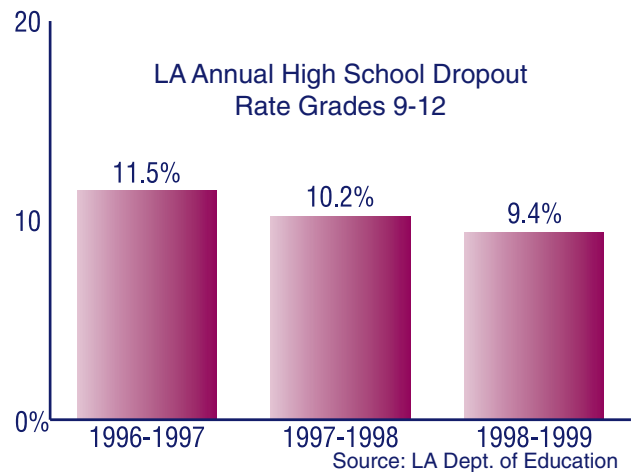


### People's Agenda Goal:

- In five years 80% of the students who take the LEAP 21 tests in English and math should score at the basic level or higher.

## High School Dropout Rate

For Louisiana's children to succeed in life, they must stay in school. Unfortunately, the statistics tell us they do not. It is difficult to get accurate dropout statistics because of the way the data is collected from state to state. What we do know is that in 1997 the U.S. Dept. of Education said Louisiana's high school dropout rate was the highest in the nation and more than double the national average of 4.6%. The state's numbers vary some from the national figures, but they tell the same story – about 10% of our kids drop out of grades 9 through 12 each year. With a greater emphasis now being placed on student performance and retention, there are signs the dropout situation is improving. It's a positive trend that must continue.

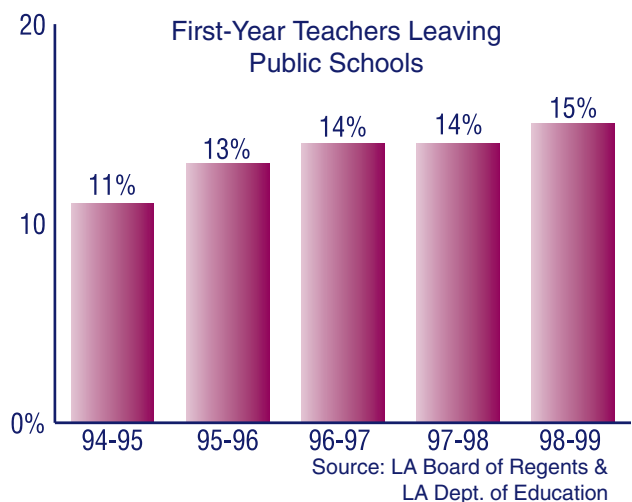


### People's Agenda Goal:

□ Louisiana's dropout rate is unacceptably high by any standard. It should decline each year and reach the Southern average in 10 years.

## Teachers Leaving Public Schools

Louisiana has a severe shortage of public school teachers, particularly in specific subject areas like math, science and special education. Contributing to this problem is the fact that too many teachers are leaving public schools in the first few years of work. Unfortunately, that number is rising. In 1998-99, 15% of the state's new teachers quit after their first year – up from 11% four years earlier. Over the course of the last five years, 27% of Louisiana's new teachers left the public schools. There could be many reasons for this: low pay, inadequate preparation, difficult working conditions, and a lack of incentives to retain quality teachers. If Louisiana's efforts to improve student performance are to succeed, the trend of young teachers leaving our public schools must be reversed.

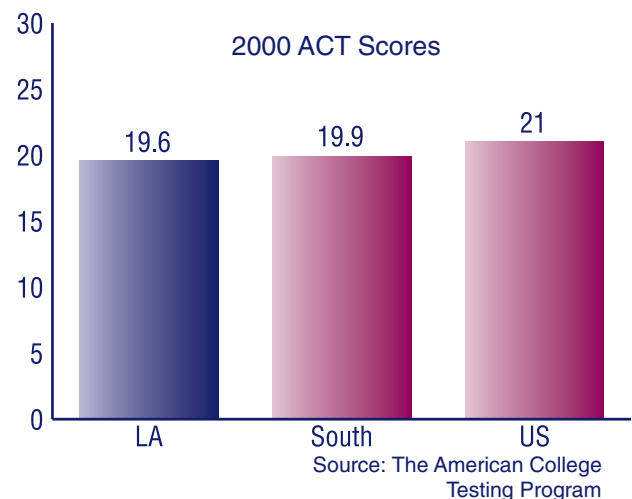


### People's Agenda Goal:

□ Over the next five years, the percentage of new teachers leaving the public school system in Louisiana should decrease each year.

## Louisiana ACT Scores

Virtually all college-bound Louisiana high school graduates take the American College Test which makes it a good indicator of how well Louisiana schools prepare students for college. The average score on the American College Test in Louisiana in 2000 was 19.6 out of a possible 36 – 10<sup>th</sup> in the South and 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation. It is not far off the Southern average of 19.9, and with the financial incentives offered by Louisiana's TOPS scholarship program, it should be within reach of the national average of 21.



### People's Agenda Goal:

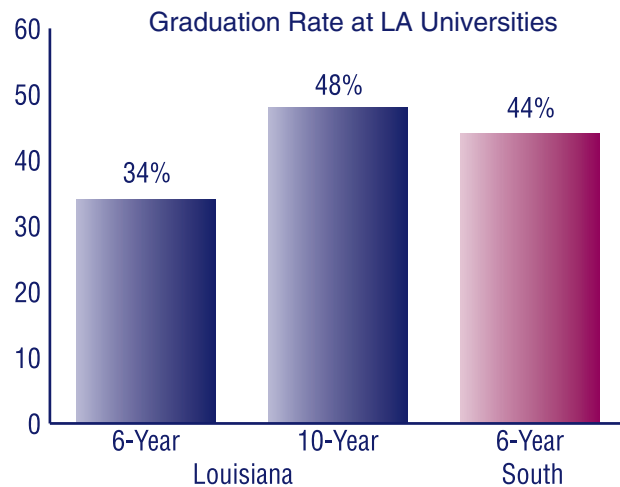
□ Louisiana's ACT scores should increase each year over the next five years and reach the Southern average.

## Graduation Rate at LA Universities

Fewer than 20% of Louisiana's citizens have earned a college degree – the sixth lowest rate in the nation. Significantly improving this figure is a long-term process. To do this, graduation rates must go up. Thirty-four percent of the first-time freshmen who enroll in LA universities graduate within six years. The Southern average is about 44%. Certainly our high poverty rate, low student performance in high school and historical lack of a community college system contribute to this. The good news is that if we track students over 10 years we find that 48% will graduate. For Louisiana to prosper, more of our citizens must earn college degrees and our state must create the jobs that will keep them here.

### People's Agenda Goal:

❑ Over the next five years, Louisiana's college graduation rate will improve.



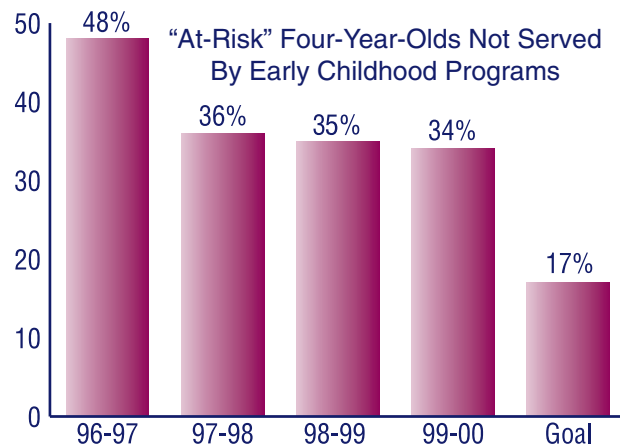
Source: LA Board of Regents & Southern Regional Education Board

## Early Childhood Education

Studies show that children have a better chance to learn and perform well in school if they get attention and stimulation early in life. Some states have major early childhood initiatives designed to reach young children who are most at risk. Louisiana has some programs aimed primarily at four-year-olds, but many children still slip through the cracks. During the 1999-2000 school year 60% of the four-year-olds in Louisiana were considered "at-risk" by the state Department of Education. About 34% of those youngsters – more than 13,000 – were not being served through any publicly funded early childhood education program. Research suggests these kids will have a more difficult time succeeding in school, requiring more attention and resources as they progress.

### People's Agenda Goal:

❑ Over the next five years the percentage of "at-risk" four-year-olds not served through public early childhood education programs will be reduced by half.

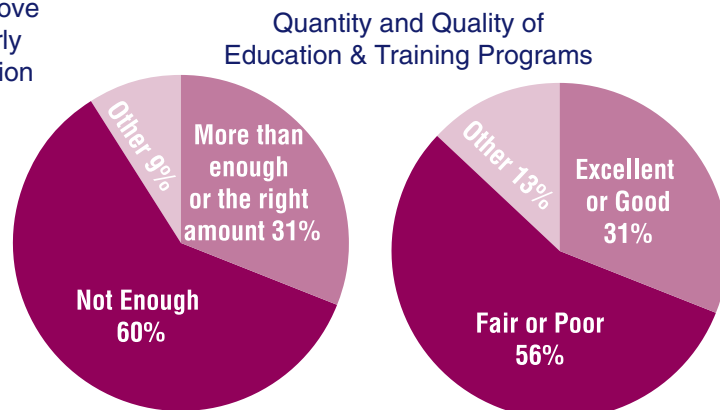


Source: LA Dept. of Education

## Education & Training Opportunities

Not everyone in Louisiana will attend a four-year university. Not everyone needs to. Other types of education and training opportunities are critical in a state like ours. Louisiana's new community and technical college system holds great potential to expand and improve education and training opportunities for all. Clearly Louisiana citizens feel this area needs the attention we are finally giving it. Sixty percent of those we surveyed for our 2000 *People's Agenda* report card say Louisiana doesn't have enough programs to help people train for new jobs or acquire new skills. Fifty-six percent believe the quality of existing programs could be better. A sharp focus on this aspect of our state education system is long overdue.

❑ Over the next five years citizen attitudes about both the quantity and quality of education and training opportunities should improve.



Source: 2000 *People's Agenda* Voter Survey



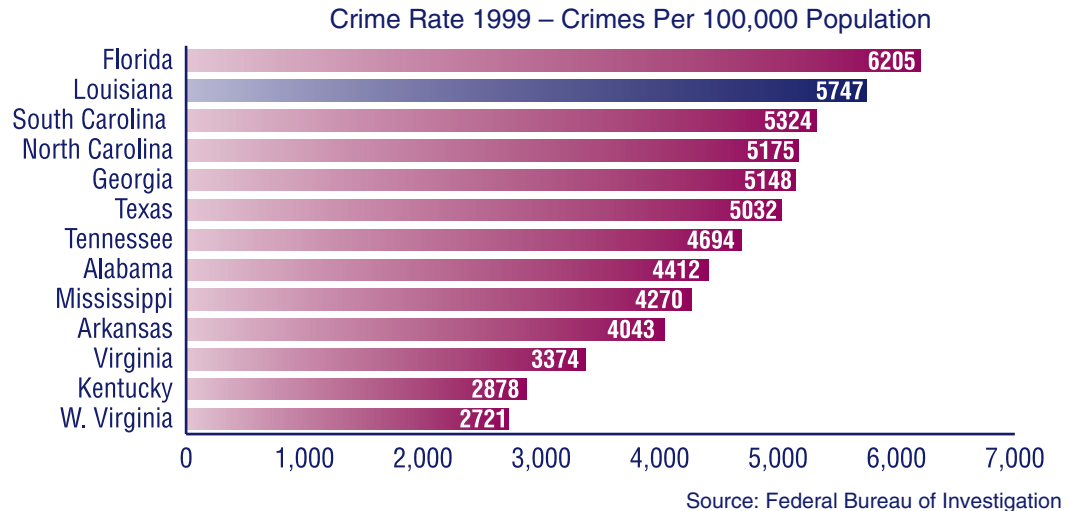
# Safe, Vibrant Communities

## Louisiana Crime Rate

Louisiana, like other states and the nation, has seen a marked decrease in crime in recent years. The problem is that our crime rate remains unacceptably high compared to the rest of the nation and most Southern states. In 1999 the overall crime rate in Louisiana, as reported by the FBI, was the fourth

highest in the nation and the second worst in the South. The problems surrounding this issue are obvious. A high crime rate threatens the safety of communities and families, and pulls greater amounts of state and local tax dollars away from other critical needs. This is evident by the fact

that Louisiana had the highest incarceration rate in the nation in 1998, and the state appropriations for the Department of Corrections continue to spiral. The overall crime rate is determined based on the incidences of murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft.



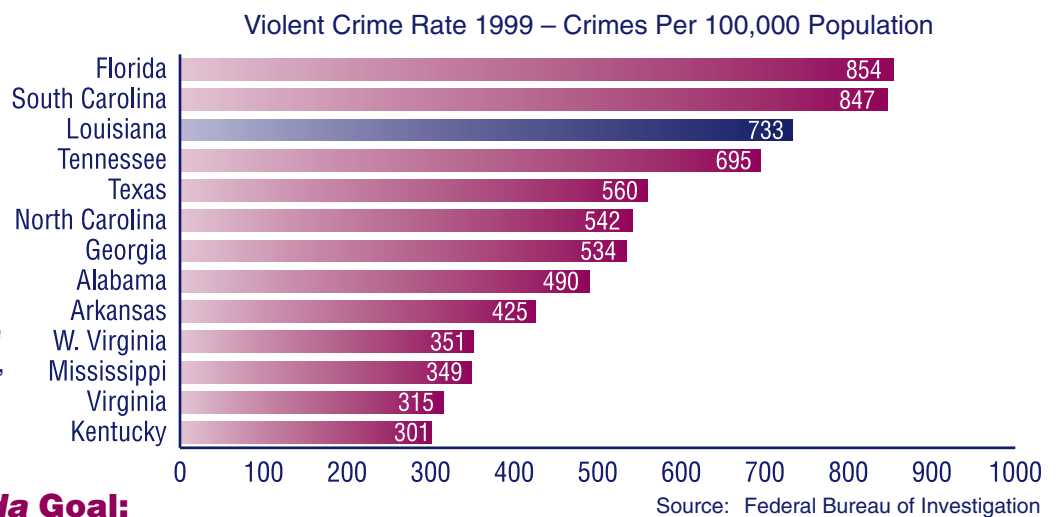
### People's Agenda Goal:

☐ Louisiana's overall crime rate should decrease every year and our ranking among the Southern states should improve.

## Louisiana Violent Crime Rate

In 1999 Louisiana's violent crime rate declined by 6% from the previous year, but was still the sixth highest in the nation. It remained the third highest in the South. This is driven to some degree by the fact that Louisiana

continues to have the highest murder rate in the nation. Interestingly Arkansas, Mississippi and Alabama all have significantly lower crime rates than Louisiana. Crimes included in the violent crime rate are murder, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault.



### People's Agenda Goal:

☐ Louisiana's violent crime rate should decrease every year, and our ranking among Southern states should improve.

## Juvenile Justice

Much of Louisiana's serious problem with adult crime begins at the juvenile level, and it's not surprising that our high poverty and illiteracy rates contribute to a high juvenile crime rate. Fortunately, studies show that many kids who get into trouble can be rehabilitated, but the states that have turned the tide in this area take an approach different from Louisiana's. We place a greater emphasis on putting even nonviolent offenders behind bars, where evidence is compelling that most will become adult criminals. Having the highest juvenile incarceration rate in the nation is expensive, too, costing more than \$26,000 per year to house one youngster in a state facility. Other states concentrate their efforts on keeping kids who are not a threat to society out of juvenile prisons – placing them instead in rehabilitation programs close to their families and schools. It's more cost-effective and evidence suggests it is more successful. Louisiana should shift its emphasis from juvenile incarceration of nonviolent offenders to rehabilitation.

### People's Agenda Goal:

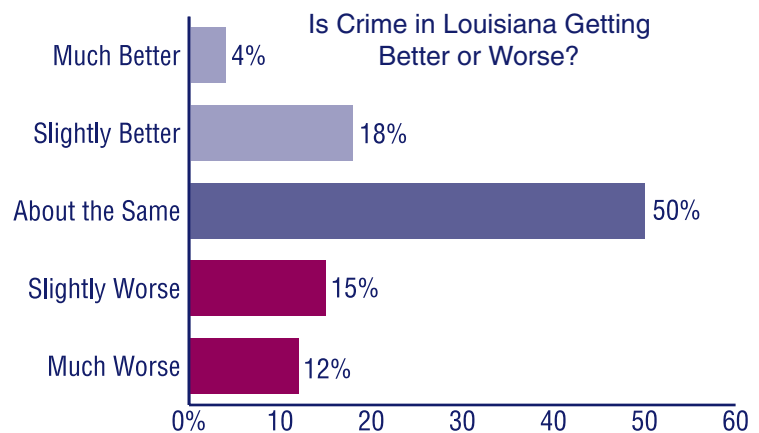
□ In June of 2000 there were 1,743 juveniles in secure care jails in Louisiana. Over the next 10 years Louisiana should use existing resources to reduce the number of nonviolent juveniles in these facilities, shifting them to rehabilitation programs in community settings where they will have better access to school, counseling and families.

## Personal Safety

It is important that citizens feel comfortable about their personal safety. Their perceptions about crime help drive state corrections policy, which in turn has an impact on the resources available for other important programs. Crime has been a major concern of citizens in all of CABL's *People's Agenda* surveys. Today, voter attitudes are mixed. Despite declining crime rates, slightly more people believe the situation has gotten worse rather than better, while half said it stayed about the same. This may be a reflection of the fact that even though serious crime is down, Louisiana's crime rate remains high compared to other states.

### People's Agenda Goal:

□ Voter attitudes about crime should track changes in overall crime rates, and as the incidence of crime is reduced, attitudes should improve each year.



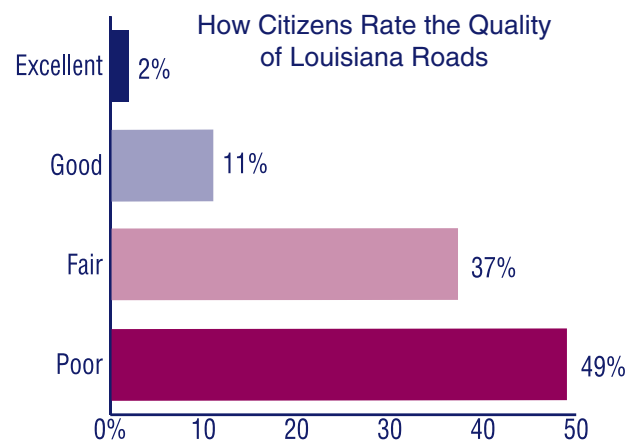
Source: 2000 *People's Agenda* Voter Survey

## Good Roads

Good roads within a state are essential. In Louisiana, they are a problem. Transportation is a necessity of life for citizens, and one of the backbones of our economy. Yet once again, Louisiana fares poorly. In its 2000 Report Card of the States the Corporation for Enterprise Development gave Louisiana a grade of "D" for the quality of the state's overall infrastructure. Our percentage of deficient highways and bridges was second worst in the South. Clearly voters agree that things are bad. Eighty-six percent of those questioned in our 2000 *People's Agenda* survey rated the quality of Louisiana's roads as either fair or poor.

### People's Agenda Goal:

□ Voter ratings of the quality of the state's roads will improve each year.



Source: 2000 *People's Agenda* Voter Survey



## An Improved Environment

The environment of a state is important. It's an economic issue. It's a health issue. It's a quality of life issue. The environment has traditionally been a concern in Louisiana for obvious reasons – the manufacturing facilities that dot our state release millions of pounds of toxic materials into the environment each year. Between 1997 and 1998 the total releases from these facilities grew by a little over 1%, and Louisiana ranked second in the nation for toxic materials released by these plants. In 1998 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency began measuring toxic releases in a new way, including not only the traditional manufacturing industries, but adding other sectors such as electric utilities, hazardous waste treatment and mining. By broadening the list of the industries that are monitored, Louisiana's rank among the states improves. In total releases within the state, Louisiana ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation and second in the South.

### People's Agenda Goal:

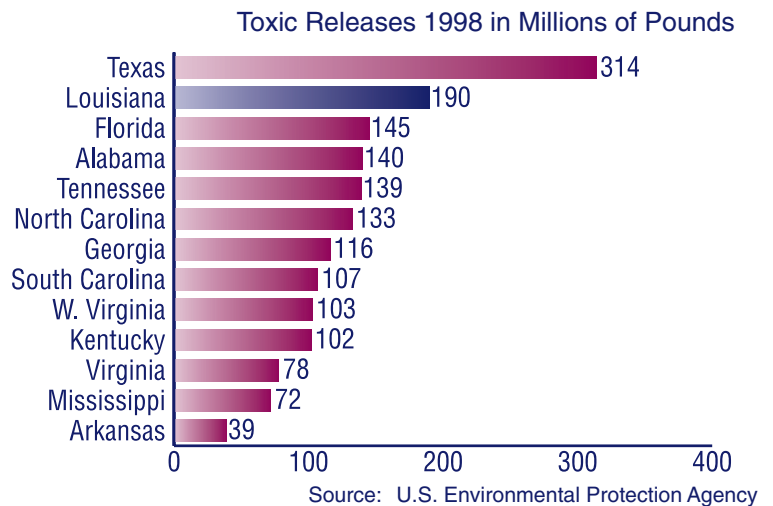
☐ Total toxic releases within the state will decline every year.

### Quality of Life

The quality of life in Louisiana is certainly in the eye of the beholder. Some people would never consider living in Louisiana. Others would never leave. Quality of life is hard to define, but for most it includes a number of considerations: education quality, concern about crime, jobs that pay a good wage, a healthy environment, recreational and entertainment activities, and – especially in Louisiana – food, music and culture. On a scale of zero-10 – with zero representing a poor quality of life – the average was 5.7. A score slightly above average isn't something to be satisfied with, but it suggests people do recognize some assets to living in Louisiana, and offers the hope that they will be willing to build on them.

### People's Agenda Goal:

☐ Over the next five years citizen attitudes about the quality of life in Louisiana should improve each year.



## Public Confidence in State Government

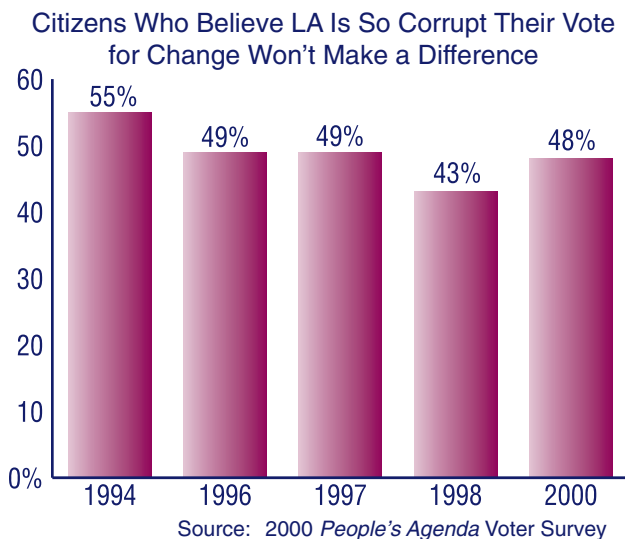
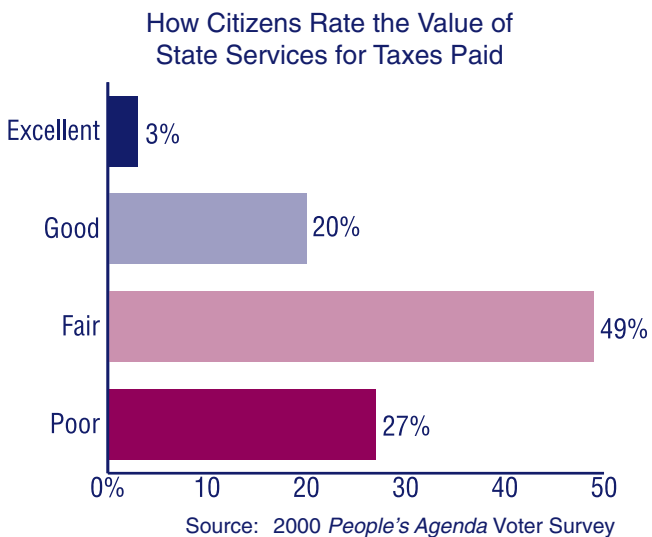
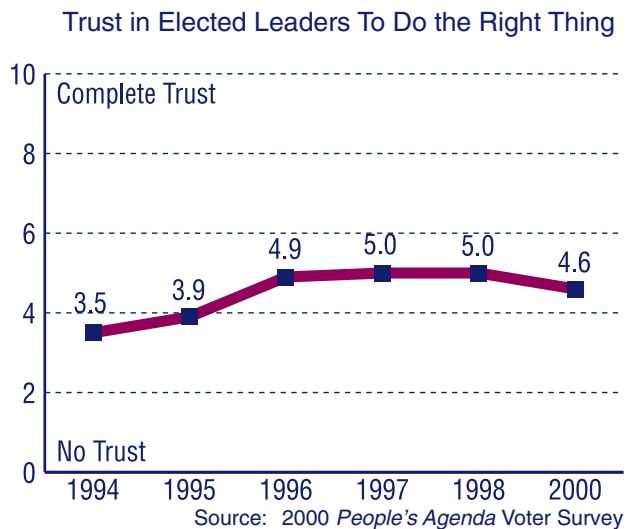
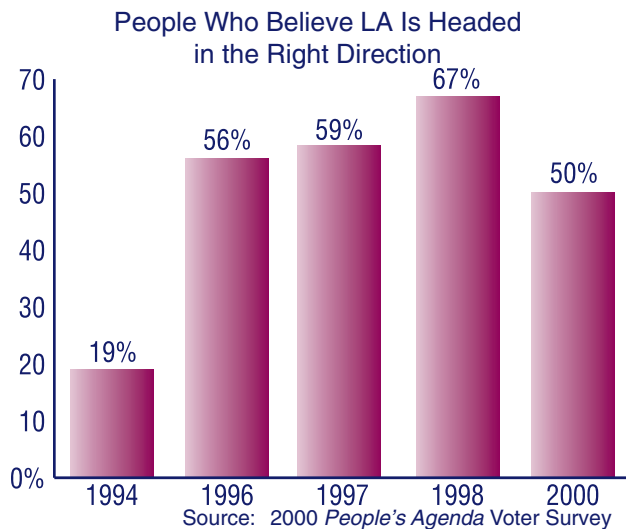
Louisiana has many difficult issues to tackle over the next several years. There are no easy solutions to the problems we face in improving education, reducing crime, fighting poverty and providing greater access to health care. Yet all of these areas must be addressed if Louisiana is to have the future we would all like it to have. Doing this will take leadership. Succeeding at it will require the trust and confidence of citizens. For the last several years CABL's *People's Agenda* project has been tracking voter attitudes about our state and its leadership. While there has been some progress over time, there are new signs of skepticism and disenchantment which should send warning signals to state leaders. Among this year's findings:

- Only half the voters surveyed believe Louisiana is headed in the right direction – down from 67% in 1998.
- Trust in state elected officials has dropped for the first time since CABL began tracking voter attitudes in 1994.
- Voters give state leaders a grade of "C-minus" for their overall job performance – down from a "C" in 1997 and 1998.
- Concern about dishonesty and corruption in Louisiana politics has risen, after a period of general decline since 1994.

This year we also asked voters to rate the value of the state services they receive for the state taxes they pay. Less than a quarter of those surveyed thought the value was good or excellent. Twenty-seven percent thought they were receiving a poor value and 49% said the value was only fair. As an indicator of the efficiency and effectiveness of the services the state delivers, citizens clearly feel shortchanged.

## People's Agenda Goal:

□ Over the next five years there should be improvement in each of these indicators which reflect public trust and confidence in state government.



### 2000 End-of-Year Grade for State Elected Officials & the Legislature

**Citizens'  
Report  
Card**

Grade	1996	1997	1998	2000
A	1%	3%	3%	4%
B	9%	18%	17%	13%
C	50%	49%	53%	44%
D	30%	20%	19%	22%
F	8%	7%	7%	14%
Average	C-	C	C	C-

Source: 2000 People's Agenda Voter Survey

# Healthy Children & Families with a Future

## Louisiana Poverty Rate

Of all the problems facing Louisiana, our state's pervasive poverty must be considered among the most critical. It's a part of our past that continues to threaten our future. In 1999 the poverty rate in Louisiana was 19.2%, the second highest in the nation and the highest in the South. The national average was 11.8% and the Southern average was 13.7%. Poverty affects the very fabric of life throughout Louisiana. It is a factor in our poor educational performance, our high crime rate, and the billions of dollars the state spends each year on health care. We have made progress over the years, but sadly Louisiana's current poverty rate is worse now than it was in 1997. Despite a relatively prosperous economy, we are one of only two Southern states to show an increase in poverty. Stated differently, our neighbors are doing better, why can't we? Louisiana cannot become the kind of place we want it to be unless we make a concerted effort to attack the poverty that has gripped our state for decades.

### People's Agenda Goal:

❑ Over the next 10 years Louisiana's poverty rate should improve each year. We should no longer have the highest rate in the South and we should improve to at least the Southern average.

## Louisiana Children in Poverty

The poverty rate among children in Louisiana continues to be one of our state's great tragedies. In 1999 26.6% of the children in Louisiana lived in poverty – the second highest rate in the nation. The Southern average was 19.6%. The national average was 16.9%. It is important to note that while Louisiana's child poverty rate did decline slightly, it remains the worst in the South. Mississippi's child poverty rate is four points lower than ours. Arkansas' is eight points lower. The fact that some of our neighboring states – ones with similar demographics and similar problems – have managed to do better, is evidence we can, too.

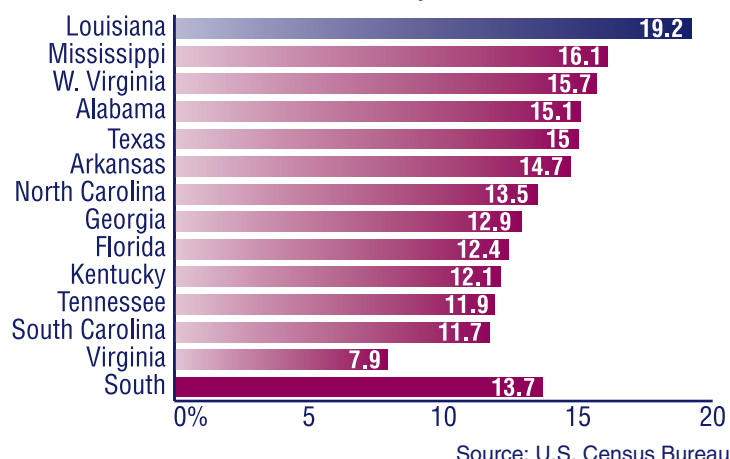
### People's Agenda Goal:

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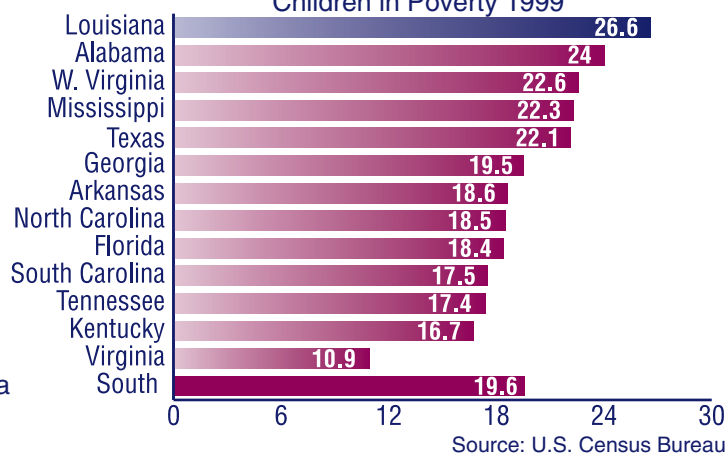
## Low Birthweight Babies

The percentage of low birthweight babies is an important indicator. It is a reflection of the poverty in a state, the education level of the

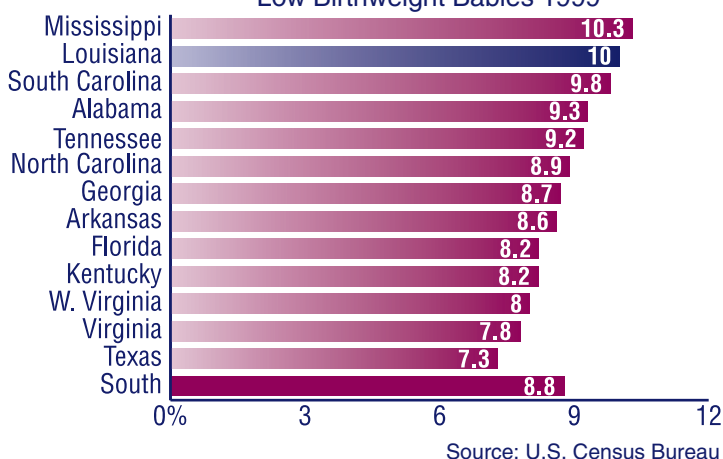
Poverty Rate 1999



Children in Poverty 1999



Low Birthweight Babies 1999



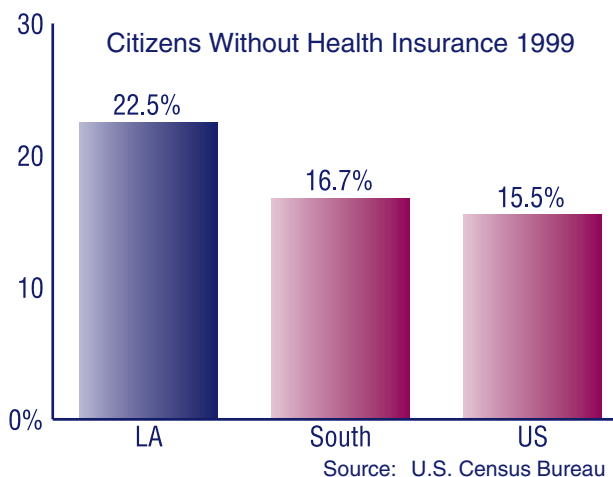
mother and access to health care. More than that, however, low birthweight babies themselves often face serious developmental problems. This frequently leads to costly neonatal care, lifelong disabilities, or difficulties in learning and succeeding at school. In 1999 Louisiana trailed only Mississippi with the highest percentage of low birthweight babies in the nation – 10%. The Southern average was 8.8% and the national average was 7.6%. Unfortunately, since 1990 the percentage of low birthweight babies has gotten worse in Louisiana, a trend our state must reverse.

### People's Agenda Goal:

❑ Over the next five years the percentage of low birthweight babies born in Louisiana will be reduced each year. Louisiana will no longer have the second highest percentage in the nation, and will reach the Southern average.

### Citizens Without Health Insurance

For a population to be healthy and productive, it must have access to adequate health care. Louisiana lags in this area. Despite Louisiana's historical reliance on the charity hospital system, more than one out of five citizens in our state is not covered by either government health care programs or private insurance. The percent of low-income children without health care coverage is even higher, though thanks to the LACHIP program, we are making progress in this area. Besides being a health care statistic, this also speaks to the quality of jobs and wages in our state. Many of those without insurance are employed in low-paying jobs where health insurance is either not offered by the employer, or too expensive. Louisiana's uninsured rate was 22.5% in 1999 – third highest in the nation and second highest in the South. The Southern average was 16.7%.

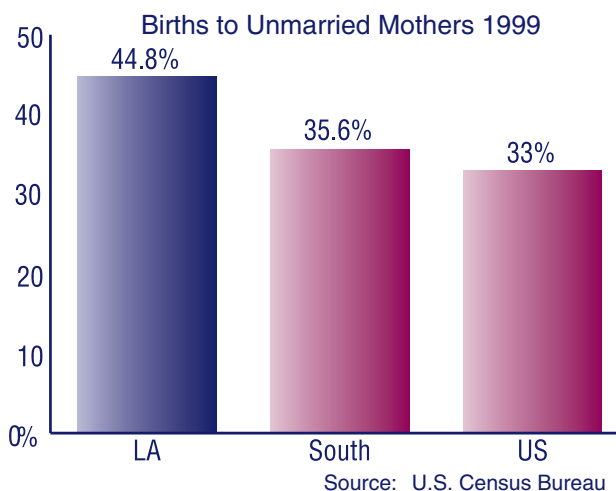


### People's Agenda Goal:

❑ Over the next five years the percentage of citizens without health insurance coverage will be reduced, reaching the Southern average.

### Births to Unmarried Mothers

The percentage of births to unmarried mothers is not a moral indicator – it is an economic one. Children born into single-parent households or unstable family situations face many obstacles. So does the single mother. She must deal with the problems of finding affordable day care and suitable employment, while balancing those concerns with the parental responsibility of spending time with the child during formative years. The fact that many of these single parents are teenagers who have not completed their education or been trained in marketable job skills makes the situation that much more difficult. The result: many of these single mothers end up on the welfare rolls or must rely upon some other type of public assistance. In 1999, 44.8% of the births in Louisiana were to unmarried women – third highest in the nation. The national average was 33% and the Southern average was 35.6%. Reversing this trend is admittedly a difficult task for state government or elected officials. Addressing it will require a cooperative effort among nonprofit organizations, community leaders and others who care. Still, it is a situation which must be acknowledged if Louisiana is to make progress in many of the areas where we lag behind.



### People's Agenda Goal:

❑ Over the next five years the percentage of births to unmarried women should decline annually.

## School-Based Health Centers

Over the years in Louisiana, the entire concept of school-based health centers has been mired in controversy. Fortunately, that situation is changing. School-based health centers are often the first – and many times the only – place where children receive regular health care. Statistics from the Office of Public Health show that while many students visit the clinics to receive treatment for common illnesses – sore throats, earaches and upset stomachs – thousands also go for general preventive medicine. This is an aspect of health care which must be expanded in Louisiana. For the 2000-2001 school year Louisiana is expected to have 42 full-time school-based health centers and 5 part-time sites in 19 parishes. Unfortunately, despite real progress in recent years, most of Louisiana's school districts, particularly in north Louisiana, are vastly underserved.

### People's Agenda Goal:

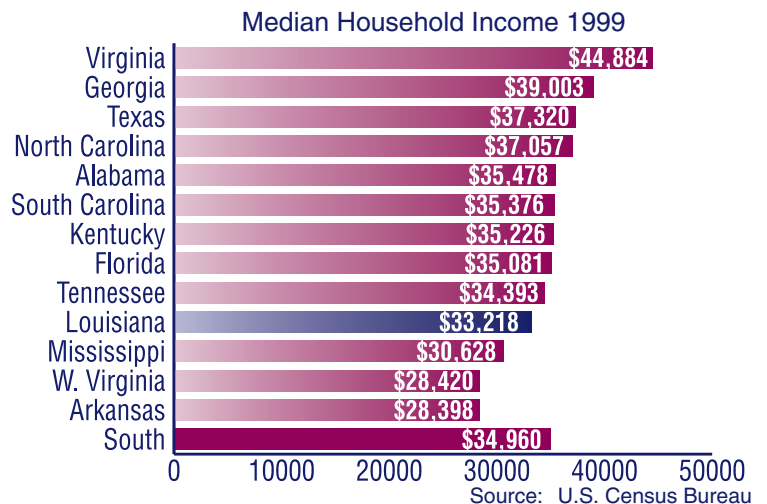
□ Each year over the next ten years the number of school-based health centers should increase so that by 2010 every parish is served by at least one school-based clinic.

## Median Household Income

The future of our families depends in large part on how Louisiana shares in the prosperity of the nation. Unfortunately, our state is not particularly prosperous. In 1999 the median household income in Louisiana was \$33,218. That was 44<sup>th</sup> in the nation and the fourth lowest in the South. By comparison the national median income in 1999 was \$39,657. The Southern average was \$34,960. More discouraging is the evidence that we're not keeping up with our neighbors. Personal income in Louisiana grew just 2.6% in 1999, lower than any state except Alaska. In 1993 household income in Louisiana was higher than South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama and Kentucky. Today their citizens are doing better than ours. The late-1990s downturn in the oil industry is not a good excuse. It only emphasizes the continuing need for the type of jobs that offer citizens promise and opportunity.

### People's Agenda Goal:

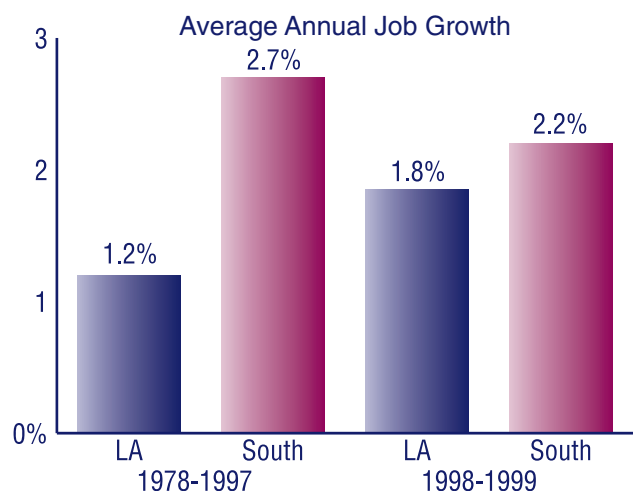
□ Over the next five years, median household income in Louisiana will increase, Louisiana will move up in the rankings of other Southern states, and will reach the Southern average.



## Quality Jobs & a Strong Economy

### Job Growth in Louisiana

Job growth is an important indicator of the vitality of a state's economy. In recent years virtually every state has seen some growth in jobs. The questions to ask are how rapidly are we adding jobs, and how does that compare with other states? Over the last two decades, the answers are discouraging. Between 1978 and 1997 Louisiana had the second lowest job growth in the South – an annual rate of 1.2% compared to the South's average of 2.7%. Today there are signs we are doing better, but we still trail many of our neighbors. Job growth in Louisiana from 1998 to 1999 was 1.8%. That was 31<sup>st</sup> in the nation and 8<sup>th</sup> in the South. The Southern average equaled the national average of 2.2%. More recently, job growth in the state appears to have slowed. Comparing the first six months of 1999 and 2000, employment grew by only .7%, even though



Source: MDC, Inc., Morgan Quitno Press, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



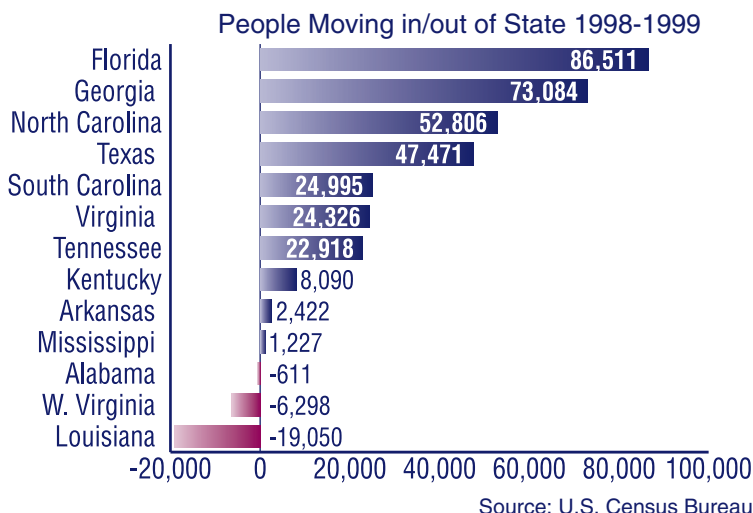
the national economy continued to perform well. Job growth is an area where Louisiana cannot afford to fall farther behind our neighboring states.

### People's Agenda Goal:

❑ The number of jobs in Louisiana will continue to increase so that in five years the state's annual job growth will equal the Southern average.

### Domestic Migration

Migration of the population says a lot about the opportunities in a state and the quality of life. Louisiana clearly has a problem in this area. From 1990 to 1999, the South had significant population growth with approximately 5 million people migrating into Southern states. At the same time, Louisiana was the only Southern state where more people moved out – nearly 100,000 – than moved in. Between 1998 and 1999 Louisiana had a net outmigration of 19,050 residents. That was the greatest loss in the South, with Louisiana one of only three Southern states experiencing a decline. This is a serious issue because economists say outmigration reflects a lack of opportunity in a state. Those who leave are often those with the greatest capacity to contribute to the tax base and well-being of the state – the very ones other states hope to attract and retain.



### People's Agenda Goal:

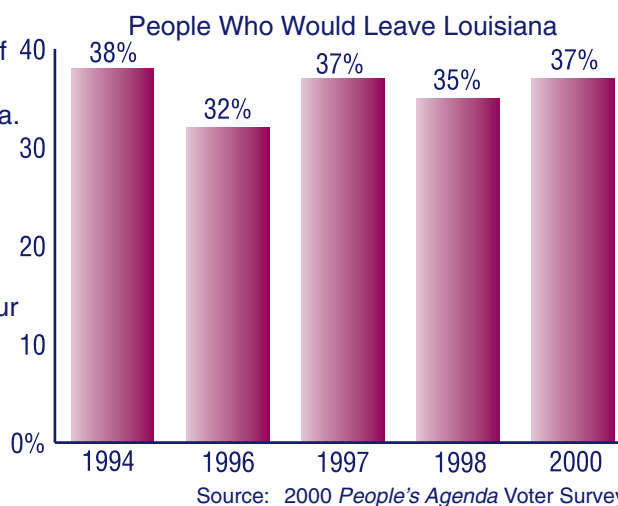
❑ Over the next five years the trend of outmigration will be reversed so that Louisiana will join the majority of other Southern states that are seeing an influx of residents seeking good jobs and a higher quality of life.

### People Who Would Leave Louisiana

Louisiana's outmigration statistics are mirrored in the attitudes of citizens. CABL has been monitoring those attitudes since 1994 and they reveal a fundamental lack of hope in the future of our state. In 2000, 37% of those we surveyed said that if they could they would leave Louisiana. Not all of them will, of course, but the fact that so many consistently express this view must be cause for concern. From 1994, when voters were in the depths of despair about nearly every aspect of our state, to today, a time of relative economic prosperity, this number has barely changed. This finding should send a strong message to our elected leaders that citizens truly do want to escape the serious problems that continue to plague Louisiana.

### People's Agenda Goal:

❑ Each year over the next five years the number of people who say they would leave Louisiana given the means and opportunity will decline.



### Access to Technology

Access to technology is an important indicator of how a state is adapting to the new economy. In this area, Louisiana continues to lag the rest of the nation. A recent study by the Progressive Policy Institute ranked Louisiana 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation with regard to technology access and related measures. The Corporation for Enterprise Development ranked Louisiana 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the percentage of households with computers.



Louisiana's 25% was well below the Southern average of 30%. Yet keeping up with the spread of computers is difficult. CABL's most recent *People's Agenda* voter survey found that 48% of the citizens we contacted said they have access to the Internet in their home. CABL will track both sets of numbers to provide a sense of how we compare with other states and get a more current snapshot from voters. One bit of good news is that Louisiana schools have made tremendous gains. In the last five years they have reduced the ratio of computers to students from 88-to-1 in 1996, to a little more than 8-to-1 in 1999. This trend must continue.

### **People's Agenda Goal:**

❑ Over the next five years citizen access to the Internet will increase, and Louisiana will reach the Southern average of households with computers.

### **Average Annual Pay**

Average annual pay is an indicator not only of the prosperity of a state, but the overall quality of jobs. Compared to other Southern states, Louisiana is not far out of line. In 1998 average annual pay in Louisiana was \$26,905. This was 32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation and eighth in the South. The national average pay was \$31,908 and the Southern average was \$27,598.

### **People's Agenda Goal:**

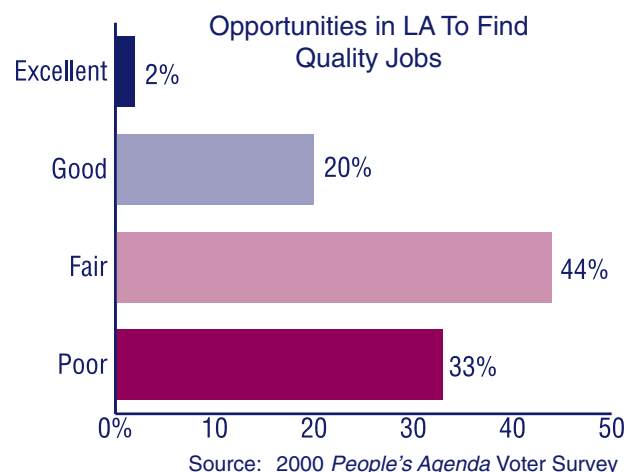
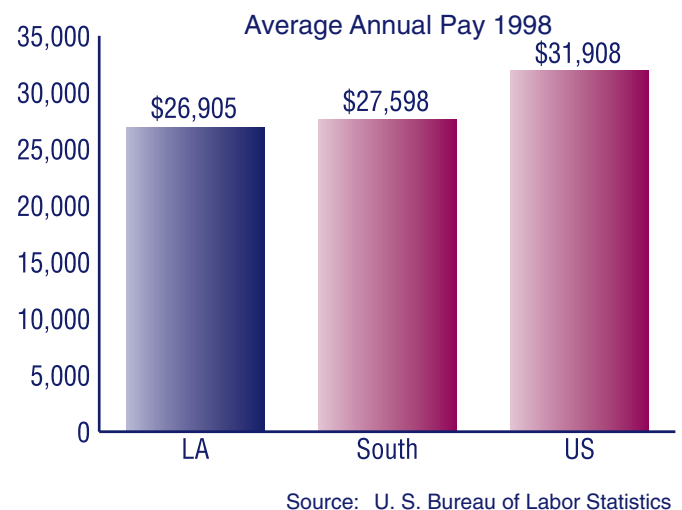
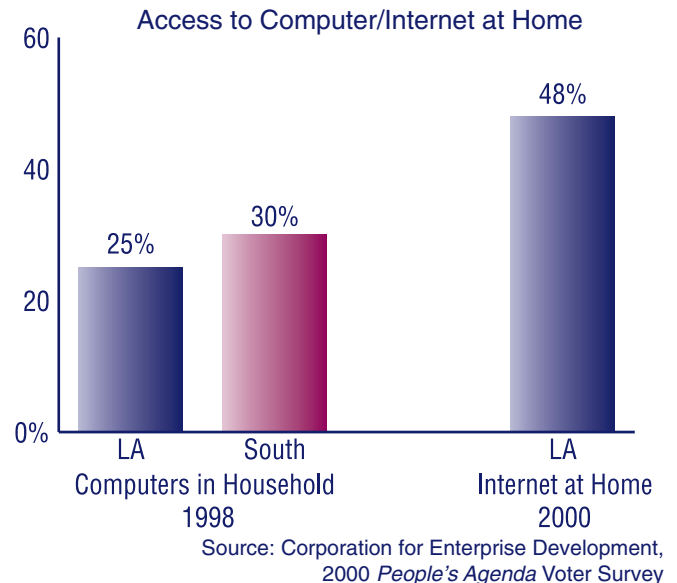
❑ Over the next five years average annual pay will increase and reach the Southern average.

### **Quality Jobs**

In many ways the last year has been a strong one for Louisiana in terms of jobs. More than 13,000 additional people were working in August of 2000 compared to the same period the previous year. At the same time, unemployment figures registered record lows. As encouraging as that is, however, the question in Louisiana must be not only of job quantity, but job quality. The citizens of Louisiana – those who are seeking good jobs and the promise of opportunity – believe this is an area where Louisiana is severely lacking. More than three-quarters say quality job opportunities in the state are no better than fair to poor. If we entertain any hope of a prosperous future, Louisiana must find a way to create better jobs for all its citizens.

### **People's Agenda Goal:**

❑ Over the next five years voter attitudes about the opportunities to find quality jobs in Louisiana will increase each year.



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### A Note About the Data

CABL has made every effort to obtain the most current data available. In some instances Louisiana state agencies may have more recent statistics than those contained in this report, but it is difficult to get comparable information from other states. For purposes of this report the South includes the following states: Louisiana, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

CABL's *People's Agenda* voter survey was conducted October 16-18, 2000, by Wirthlin Worldwide in McLean, VA. We surveyed 602 registered voters statewide with a margin of error of +/- 4%.



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