

Statement

December 17, 2008



**Council Budget Committee Chair Makes Statement
On Behalf of the City Council
Relative to the City's 2009 Budget**

After considerable input and recommendations from my fellow councilmembers, as Council Budget Chair, I am privileged to present the position of the majority of the New Orleans City Council relative to the City's 2009 Budget.

The time has come for this Council to ensure a balanced budget and act in the best interest of the citizens of New Orleans. This budget process has been arduous and tedious - but at the end of the day we are united in our 2009 budget course and confident that we have been fiscally responsible on behalf of the citizens of this City.

The majority of us have chosen to override Mayor Nagin's vetoes. Our action to override keeps in place the budget this Council passed on December 1st - retaining funding for critical public safety needs and important educational programs for our City's children.

The intent of our action today:

1. Fully restores \$1.45 Million funding for the Office of the District Attorney. We have also authorized an additional \$700,000 as originally requested by the District Attorney.
2. Fully restores \$1.7 Million funding for the Office of the Indigent Defender. A portion of the funding will come from the General Fund with the balance from the implementation of a fee on red-light tickets.
3. Fully restores \$200,000 funding for the After School Partnership and the Aquatics program.
4. Continues de-funding of \$379,000 for the Office of Municipal Investigation appropriating those dollars to the Department of Public Works.
5. Fully restores \$100,000 to the LSU Cooperative Extension Service; \$25,000 to Crimestoppers.
6. We are reducing the appropriation for "take home" administrative vehicles, exempting first responders. This will save the City a total of \$2 Million - \$800,000 on Fuel and Maintenance and \$1.2 Million on new car acquisition beyond those needed for public safety. Additionally, there will be no new cars issued without a utilization study excepting public safety. This savings allows the diversion of funds to critical criminal justice and public safety needs, as well as provides a funding source of \$500,000 for performance based auditing.

Regarding the Sanitation Department:

It is the Council's intent to place 25% of the Sanitation Department's Budget in reserve pending the outcome of the ongoing solid waste collection audit.

Further it is this Council's intent that the Mayor support full funding of \$4 Million of SDT's enhancement sanitation contractual services.

Contractually, it is within the Mayor's power to authorize the enhancement sanitation services for the French Quarter. It is our hope that he will agree with the Council and the public to utilize the service provided by SDT under its current contract.

The Council has looked long and hard at its previous decision to use the Community Disaster Loans and the Reserve Fund Balance.

In retrospect - we find this to be too risky given the current economic climate. The long-term sustainability of New Orleans is our first priority.

Rather than roll forward the millage, and raise taxes on citizens to balance the budget - as recommended by Mayor Nagin, we agree to proposed reductions to City Department budgets.

With the exception of Public Safety, Sanitation and Recreation, the Council has agreed to a 5.58% reduction of every City Department's budget. This will save the City slightly over \$4.7 Million. This action will reduce the impact on use of the CDL by more than 50%.

The City Charter provides that the City Council can, in this additional regular meeting, override budget vetoes and introduce amendments to its originally proposed budget.

Today, we will take action to override the Mayor's vetoes as previously outlined and introduce amendments to the 2009 Budget which will partially restore the CDL to a \$5.4 million level.

To that end, I move to override the Mayor's Veto.

Contact: Jared Brossett
Chief of Staff
Office of District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell
Cell: (504) 701-6993

New Orleans City Council

The New Orleans City Council is the legislative branch of New Orleans City government. The Council considers and enacts all local laws that govern the City of New Orleans. The Council also approves the operating and capital budgets for the City, as recommended by the mayor, and continually monitors revenues and expenditures for local government operations. The City Council is also the regulatory body for public utilities. It also reviews and has final say on many land use and zoning matters, as well as considers major economic development projects for the City. As a Board of Review for Orleans Parish, the Council examines appeals of property tax assessments for real estate taxes, and certifies tax rolls to the Louisiana Tax Commission. Other responsibilities of the Council include overseeing the operation of the public access television in Orleans Parish.

The City Council is comprised of five districts and two councilmembers-at-large. Council President and Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson; Council Vice-President and Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow; Council District "A" Shelley Midura; Council District "B" Stacy S. Head; Council District "C" James Carter; Council District "D" Cynthia Hedge-Morrell; and Council District "E" Cynthia Willard-Lewis.