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Last Issue of 2022

**A NIGHT FOR LONG SHOTS**

*A proper farewell to the election year*

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Louisiana's last round of elections for 2022 belonged to the long shots.

Few politicos, if any, saw **Davante Lewis** coming. A Black, 30-year-old gay man, Lewis made a name for himself in Baton Rouge as an appropriations lobbyist before upsetting incumbent Public Service Commissioner **Lambert Boissiere III** of New Orleans this past weekend.

The companies regulated by the PSC dug deep for Boissiere, but it wasn't enough to quell public sentiment about the high cost of electricity bills and post-storm performances. Now those same companies are scrambling to figure out what Lewis' election will mean in the years to come.

Then there's Republican attorney **Tom Arceneaux**. A year ago, only a sprinkling of brave souls would have bet big on Arceneaux winning a bid for mayor in the Democratic stronghold of Shreveport. Yet top Dems in the city rallied around Arceneaux and together they toppled longtime state Sen. **Greg Tarver**, a legendary Democrat who simply made too many enemies over the decades.

The real trick for Arceneaux — governing — comes next. Already the mayor-elect is talking about “cross-community” input for his transition team. That’s a smart move. An unparalleled bipartisan effort put Arceneaux into office, so he should find a way to govern in the same spirit.

Aside from long shots, the last elections of the year were also filled with big shots, no shots and hot shots, such as the following...

- **AMENDMENT POLITICS:** Secretary of State **Kyle Ardoin** held a press conference to support the first proposed amendment on the ballot to prohibit non-citizens from voting. The amendment, whether it was actually needed or not, will most certainly be fodder for Ardoin on the campaign trail next year. “This vote sends a clear message that the radical election policies of places like San Francisco, New York City and Washington, D.C., have no place in Louisiana,” Ardoin said on election night.
- **PARISH POLITICS:** In what was huge news for the oil and gas industry, commercial and recreational fishing interests, and lovers of the Orange Festival, former Parish Councilman **Keith Hinkley** became the new president of Plaquemines Parish after besting Parish Councilman **Benny Rousselle** by 394 votes. This was Louisiana’s only major race for parish president this fall, but there will be many in 2023. A downturn in the economy, namely the energy sector, forced incumbent President’s **Kirk Lepine’s** performance into the spotlight. Could it happen elsewhere next year?
- **RE-ELECTED MAYORS:** Hammond Mayor **Peter Panepinto** and Delhi Mayor **Jesse Washington** were both re-elected with about 60 percent of the vote. Incumbent Opelousas Mayor **Julius Alsandor** got to keep his title as well, but only by 97 votes. (There were several mayoral races in cities and towns across Louisiana this month. Learn about all of them at [www.SOS.La.Gov](http://www.SOS.La.Gov).)
- **INCUMBENTS DOWN:** Over in Crowley, where “life is rice and easy,” as the tourism slogan claims, incumbent Mayor **Tim Monceaux** lost his gig to challenger and fellow Republican **Chad Monceaux** by 367 votes. Believe it or not, the two men are not related. Kentwood Mayor **Rochell D. Bates** also lost her seat this past weekend to fellow Democrat **Irma T. Gordon** by just seven votes.

- **EVERY VOTE COUNTS:** **Carolyn Bowser** won her bid for Baldwin aldermen by three votes, **Sonceria Brown Evans** was elected to the West Baton Rouge Parish School Board by nine votes, **Amber Cox** made her way on the Winn Parish School Board by 16 votes and just 19 votes made up the margins in the wins of **Latasha Anderson Mitchell** for Minden councilman and **Matt Talbert** for Sterlington mayor.
- **AN UNBELIEVABLE TIE VOTE:** If all of those close vote counts didn't supply enough drama for you, there was actually a rare tie vote in the race for mayor of Turkey Creek in Evangeline Parish. This mayoral seat, previously held by state Sen. **Heather Cloud**, yielded a 109-to-109 vote for candidates **Bert Campbell** and Vicki **Chaddrick**. The deadline to contest the results is next week, but officials suspect a new election will ultimately need to be held.

Still hungry for more election action? Well, you're in luck. The first election of 2023 will probably be scheduled for Jan. 14 — to settle that tie vote in Turkey Creek. Assuming nothing changes in those results, both candidates will be allowed to appear on the ballot once more.

If the Turkey Creek re-do is indeed scheduled, then the Feb. 18 special legislative election in New Orleans will become the second political contest of the New Year. That election is needed to replace state Sen. **Royce Duplessis** in House District 93.

Looking even further ahead, there will be municipal elections across the state on March 25 and then the big statewide election cycle begins with the primary on Oct. 14. The latter ballot will include the race for governor.

So enjoy this holiday break from elections while you can. It won't last long.

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# **Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana is a Major Sponsor of LPB's “Why Louisiana Ain't Mississippi... or Any Place Else!”**

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*Our people's deep connections to Louisiana history are an important part of why we contribute economically and culturally to the state we love. Our tribe is proud to contribute major financial support to LPB's latest work, which also features our chairman, **Jonathan Cernek**, talking about our people's history in Louisiana before colonization. We're honored to be a part of telling Louisiana's story in a way that honors our people and our cultural contributions. This two-part special, "Why Louisiana Ain't Mississippi... or Any Place Else!," showcases Louisiana's significance on the world stage.*

## **Part I**

You can't talk about Louisiana without talking about water, especially the mighty Mississippi River. It was the life source for many of the Native Americans who inhabited this land for thousands of years before colonization. On this first night, we begin at Louisiana's beginning, exploring places such as Poverty Point, the swamps of Acadiana and visit the Coushatta Pow-Wow. Plus, the founding of New Orleans, which becomes the port gateway to the New World long before Ellis Island.

## **Part II**

Napoleon makes the sale of the century. More people come to Louisiana from all parts of the world producing an amazing culture full of talented artists, soulful musicians, bombastic politicians and some of the biggest names in sports. Explore our history through the stories of Shreveport's Municipal Auditorium, the rich New Orleans music scene with Irma Thomas, Winnfield's Louisiana Political Museum, and more, for some of the most memorable moments in Louisiana's inimitable history.

*[Click here](#) to learn more about our support for this programming and stream both parts of this important documentary.*

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## **POLITICAL CHATTER**

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- **JNK IN JANUARY:** In an email sent to supporters and friends yesterday, U.S. Sen. **John Kennedy** indicated he would make a decision about a bid for governor in January. He did not offer a specific date. Here's the body of the email: "I hope all of you had a wonderful Thanksgiving. I'm doing my best to get in the Christmas spirit. Many of you have given me advice about the Governor's race, for which I am grateful. Some of you have encouraged me to run; others have advised me to stay in the Senate. I will make a final decision in January. My family and I are discussing it, and my decision will turn on that plus where I think I can help Louisiana the most—in Louisiana or Washington. Senator and Governor are very, very different jobs. In the meantime, enclosed is a poll I just did on federal issues, state issues, the Senate and the Governor's race. I will not make a decision solely on the polls nor will I make it on which party controls the Senate. I cherish the support and friendship of each of you. Best, John"
- **THE ATTACHMENTS:** [Topline poll results](#) and [cross-tabs](#).
- **POLLING DISCLAIMER:** Read any poll at your own risk. Some are legit. Some are not legit. Some have funny math baked into the final numbers and others offer a great and reliable snapshot of public sentiment at a given moment. For more, check out "[How to read polls like an expert — or, at least, not like a newbie](#)" from *The Washington Post*. You can also learn about standards and polling ethics at the [American Association for Public Opinion Research](#).
- **PUBLISHING REMINDER:** This is the final issue of *The Tracker* for 2023. If I don't see you between now and then, have a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year! (For everyone with a subscription to [www.LaPoliticsWeekly.com](http://www.LaPoliticsWeekly.com), the year-ender issue is in the works!)
- **A GOOD BET:** *Editor & Publisher* magazine [has a new piece](#) about how much sports betting and other future forms of betting are shaping the financial trajectory of *The Advocate*. The program has been so successful it has already given way to a new division of Georges Media Group. ([Read more](#))
- **TUESDAY FUNDRAISER:** Reps. **Randal Gaines** and **Ed Larvadain** at noon at Longview...
- **WEDNESDAY FUNDRAISERS:** Rep. **Joe Orgeron** at noon at Longview... Sens. **Stewart Cathey**, **Patrick McMath**, **Barry Milligan** and **Kirk Talbot** at noon at the **Jimmie Davis House**...

Rep. **Mack Cormier** at 6 p.m. at the Red Maple Restaurant in Gretna...

- **THURSDAY FUNDRAISERS:** Reps. **Les Farnum, Brett Geymann, Troy Romero** and **Phillip Tarver** at noon at the Jimmie Davis House... Reps. **Polly Thomas** and **Mary DuBuisson** at noon at the LRA House... Reps. **Ken Brass** and **Matthew Willard** at noon at Longview... Rep. **Bob Owen's** "Opelousas-Style Chicken & Sausage Gumbo Fundraiser" at 3:30 p.m. at the Beer League...
- **FRIDAY FUNDRAISER:** Sen. **Joe Bouie** at noon at Longview...
- **MEETING-PALOOZA:** There are more than two dozen state agency and legislative committee meetings scheduled between now and Thursday. Seriously. So go to [www.Legis.La.Gov](http://www.Legis.La.Gov) to make sure you're not missing anything. Subscribers to [www.LaPoliticsWeekly.com](http://www.LaPoliticsWeekly.com) learned last week which meetings will be the most important and what's on the agendas.
- **POLITICS UNWRAPPED:** Gift subscriptions and bulk subscriptions to Louisiana's oldest political trade publication are now available! For the past 30 years, *LaPolitics Weekly* has brought subscribers the best (and the worst) from the world of Louisiana politics — from polls and profiles to exclusive scoops and fundraising news. For a special holiday discount, send your requests for gift subscriptions and bulk subscriptions to [JJA@LaPolitics.com](mailto:JJA@LaPolitics.com) or call 225-772-2518. You can also purchase an individual subscription instantly at [www.LaPoliticsWeekly.com](http://www.LaPoliticsWeekly.com). (Subscriptions not your thing? Try a book on Louisiana politics! Use the contact information above to inquire about copies of *The Party Is Over*, *The Last Constitution*, *Long Shot*, *Cross to Bear* or *The Last Hayride*.)

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## HEADLINES & BYLINES

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- WVLA: BESE to take up new path toward school grading system
- Advertiser: **Mattress Mack**, gambler, philanthropist, makes Louisiana his sports betting home
- Advocate: **Kyle Ardoin**: Louisiana election integrity is the envy of other states

- Nieman: How reporters are countering public officials who use lawsuits to suppress public records requests
- Illuminator: Legislators want Edwards administration to spread around water, sewer money
- Business Report: State auditors call for more transparency when it comes to tourism spending

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## WHAT YOU MISSED IN LW

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*Here's what you missed in the latest issue of LaPolitics Weekly, published last week...*

- **WEED LICENSE FINALE**: A subcommittee of the state Pharmacy Board has recommended seven applicants for the state's only available medical marijuana pharmacy permit...
- **BATTLE OF THE BRANCHES**: Attorney General **Jeff Landry** has filed a petition to intervene in a lawsuit brought by the Louisiana Independent Pharmacies Association against the Edwards Administration. LIPA wants to cancel a \$2 billion contract the Division of Administration approved between the Office of Group Benefits and CaremarkPCS Health to manage prescription drug services for thousands of state employees and retirees. After hearing complaints about high costs to the state and low reimbursements for pharmacists, members of Joint Budget originally rejected the OGB contract. Commissioner of Administration **Jay Dardenne**, however, told lawmakers the Division would move forward with the contract based on a recent court order..
- **INSURANCE RACE SPECULATION**: Department sources wonder who will actually make the big race in 2023... (Another take: Insurance Commissioner says special session may be needed for insurance crisis)
- **LaPOLITICS Q&A**: "This fiscal session will limit the amount of 'major wedge issue' bills to at most five per legislator," said **Gordon Reese**, vice president of Innovative Politics, when asked about the politics of the upcoming regular session. "But in the current polarized

political climate, with the election looming, you can rest assured there will still be plenty of legislation that grabs attention. But I would be surprised if the most controversial issues make it through both chambers in this upcoming session, as the body and its leaders are typically less willing to lean on members in an election year to make any vote that could be considered risky to their political future.

- **NEWS YOU CAN USE:** FEC Finally Comes Up With Rules for Digital Disclaimers
- **ANNOUNCED:** As previously reported in *LaPolitics*, Ascension Parish businessman **Brandon Trosclair** is running for secretary of state as a Trump Republican. Now he's officially announced...
- **FIELD NOTES:** Next REC meeting set... Lawmaker wins international award...
- **HISTORY:** Special coverage of the history of the Republican Party in Louisiana and an overview of the impact of President **Ronald Reagan's** two terms on Louisiana...
- **THEY SAID IT:** "Anything is fair game when you run for office." — Attorney **Bob Ellis**, who operates the One Hundred Percent super PAC, in *The Advocate*

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Our History:

**Popeyes, Christmas Lights  
& the Supreme Court**

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There's a long and storied tradition of decorating the Capitol building in Baton Rouge and its surrounding grounds for Christmas.

During the 1980's, long strings of lights were strung high in the sky, starting from the Capitol's observation deck and dropping down. Another massive string of lights stretched across the Senate's exterior, across Memorial Hall and then again across the House, like in the photograph above.

Today, there's a more sophisticated lighting display at the Capitol that allows the management team to illuminate the top of the building in different colors, making it appear as if Huey's House was painted.

But nothing can beat the 1990 wonderland created by late chicken king **Al Copeland**. His Christmas decorations were legendary — and they moved around quite a bit.

The Popeyes founder at one point had all of his lights, figures and ornaments outside of his business headquarters and then around his home in Jefferson Parish.

Controversy and complaints followed the lavish displays everywhere they went, until they reached the Capitol grounds in 1990. More than 100 prison inmates were needed to install 1.5 million lights on the Capitol grounds.

The move to Baton Rouge was the brainchild of then-Agriculture Commissioner **Bob Odom**, who knew all about Copeland's challenges with Christmas decorations.

For context, here's a *New York Times* [article](#) that was published on Christmas Eve in 1985:

### **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ORDERED DARK**

The Louisiana State Supreme Court today ordered Al Copeland to turn off his 250,000 Christmas lights and then ordered a warrant for his arrest.

Mr. Copeland, who is also the owner of Popeyes Famous Fried Chicken, is famous for his annual Christmas display: angels, reindeer, a large snowman, a Nativity scene, a neon Star of Bethlehem and shrubbery shining with all those lights.

After a hearing this morning in the State Supreme Court, Chief Justice **John A. Dixon Jr.** ordered Mr. Copeland to "discontinue immediately the display, both on his own lawn and wherever he has supplied exhibits or displays in the

neighborhood." The Chief Justice said a warrant for Mr. Copeland's arrest was ordered for contempt of a court order to modify his display in a way that would avoid bumper-to-bumper traffic in the neighborhood.

The ruling this afternoon, an unusually fast response, followed energetic arguments this morning on both sides of the issue. The annual Christmas display has drawn as many as 500,000 people a month to the affluent, usually quiet, neighborhood in Metairie, a New Orleans suburb, where Mr. Copeland has his mansion.

Mr. Copeland is "going to do exactly as he pleases until stopped," said **Cecil Burglass Jr.**, arguing in court today against the lights on behalf of his client, **Burton Klein**, who is Mr. Copeland's neighbor. "I believe he doesn't believe there is a court in the state that can react fast enough to stop him," said Mr. Burglass. "He's got all the money in the world."

Mr. Burglass told the court this morning that Mr. Copeland, far from complying with the court order to diminish the display had "enhanced it."

"The display this year," he said, "is as extravagant and garish as it's ever been.

Interviewed outside the courtroom today, Mr. Klein said his life has been severely inconvenienced by Mr. Copeland's annual decorations, across the street from his house. "We haven't had a house guest at Christmas in three years," he said.

Later, work crews began to dismantle the display while Sheriff **Harry Lee** watched. He said Mr. Copeland would not be arrested because he was following the order to take down the lights.

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## **SOCIALLY YOURS**

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### ***WEDDING BELLS***

**Susan Shaw Nickel** and **Jim Nickel** are toasting to 29 years together... **Danielle Doiron Leger** and former Speaker Pro Tem **Walt Leger** celebrated 10 years last week... **Karron Clark Alford** and **Jeremy Alford** will celebrate 20 years together later this month (12/30)...

### ***HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TRACKERS!***

- Tuesday, Dec. 13: **Jay Batt** and **Michelli Martin**

- Wednesday, Dec. 14: Insurance Commissioner **Jim Donelon**, former Rep. **Austin Badon**, **Stan Hewitt** and **Matt Benyon**
- Thursday, Dec. 15: **Karron Clark Alford**, late Gov. **Kathleen Blanco** (1942), **Donna Brazile**, **Chett Chiasson**, **Paige Hightower** and **Ben Lemoine**
- Friday, Dec. 16: Former Rep. **Jack Smith**, **Erin Monroe Wesley**, **Teri Hutchinson** and **Matt Derbes**
- Saturday, Dec. 17: **Danny Leming** and **Charlie Whinham**
- Sunday, Dec. 18: Rep. **Barbara Freiberg**, **Terry Baugh**, **Laura Paul**, **Douglas McGinity** and **John Spain**
- Monday, Dec. 19: Sen. **Jay Luneau**, former Rep. **Loulan Pitre**, **Rad Trascher**, **Cheri Coussan**, **Nic Walts** and **Jason Waggenpack**
- COMING UP: **Carol Shadoin** (12/20), Sen. **Mike Reese** (12/22), **Kat Dore** (12/23), **Attorney General Jeff Landry** (12/23), **Scott Sternberg** (12/23), Rep. **Barbara Carpenter** (12/24), **Stan Harris** (12/25), former Sen. **Reid Falconer** (12/26), Rep. **Jonathan Goudeau** (12/26), **Charlie Buckels** (12/28), **Don Briggs** (12/30), **Patti Giannobile** (12/30), **Eric Holl** (12/30), **Melissa Landry** (12/30) and former Rep. **Quentin Dastugue** (12/31)
- Have an upcoming birthday or a date I need to know about? Drop a line to [JJA@LaPolitics.com](mailto:JJA@LaPolitics.com).

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**THE END.**