

THE TOWN TALK

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ALEXANDRIA-PINEVILLE, LOUISIANA

House bill calls for limited constitutional convention

Madison Maronge and Elizabeth White
LSU Marshaling School News Service

BATON ROUGE — The Louisiana House kicked off discussion Tuesday of Gov. Jeff Landry's call for a convention this spring to pare down the state's Constitution.

HB 800, sponsored by Rep. Beau Beaulieu, R-New Iberia, calls for a limited constitutional convention and was introduced to the House and Governmental Affairs committee. The panel will not vote on the bill until next week.



Beaulieu

Beaulieu also introduced amendments and answered committee member's questions about the purpose and plans for the convention.

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"This is not a rewrite of the constitution," he said. "This is a reorganization of the constitution. We would simply be moving items from the constitution and placing them in statute, respecting the previous authors of the constitution."

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Guatemalan native sells seafood dish ceviche at Alexandria market



Ceviche is a popular seafood dish along the coasts of Latin America that Alex Porras, owner of POME, makes and sells at the Cabrini Farmers Market in Alexandria every Saturday. MELINDA MARTINEZ/THE TOWN TALK, PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Melinda Martinez
Alexandria Town Talk
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ceviche is a popular seafood dish along the coasts of Latin America that Alex Porras, owner of POME, makes and sells at the Cabrini Farmers Market, 223 Texas Avenue, every Saturday.

"I was born in Central America. I was brought up eating it," said Porras who comes from Guatemala. He added that

it's a popular dish there and can be bought just about anywhere. Many restaurants called ceviche it.

Central America is between both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, so they have a variety of seafood available.

"There are several ways you can make ceviche. The base is lime juice. I make the traditional Guatemalan ceviche which is you marinate the fish in lime juice. And then you season it with salt, pepper," he said.

Even Tony Chachere's can be used to season it, he added.

"And then it's got the onions, cilantro and tomatoes. You let them marinate overnight, so the acidity in the lime pretty much cooks the fish," said Porras. "And so that's the traditional one."

Then there's the Peruvian style that doesn't have cilantro or tomatoes.

"I make it with jalapenos and red on-

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Teen shot bystander, then self, sheriff says

Melissa Gregory
Alexandria Town Talk
USA TODAY NETWORK

Two people are dead after an altercation between a mother and son resulted in one bystander being shot and the son shooting himself, according to the Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office.

Just before 7 p.m. on April 12, deputies and the Cottle Fire Department responded to a call about a shooting in the parking lot of Lil Boo's T-Net Shop at the intersection of La. Highway 28 West and Saint Clair Road in Gardner, made a news release.

Two people, a 27-year-old man and a 17-year-old boy, had gunshot wounds. Both were taken to a hospital, and detectives began an investigation.

What they determined was that it be-

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Victims of violence talk to students

Melissa Gregory
Alexandria Town Talk
USA TODAY NETWORK

Gasps rose from some of the freshmen and sophomores at Folsom High School after a woman identified herself as the one they had just heard screaming on a 911 call from June 7, 1993, the day her ex-boyfriend stabbed her repeatedly.

"This is very hard for me to talk about," said Paula Shackelford, "because I relive every moment of that tragedy when I hear that 911 call."

But Shackelford said if she can reach one person, it's worth reliving the night she almost died.

Eighteen at the time, and home with her baby, niece and nephew, Shackelford's ex broke into her Tingo home. He grabbed a 13-inch butcher knife from her kitchen, stabbing her head, stomach and chest.

The couple had dated briefly before Shackelford realized the relationship "was turning into something that was too much for me to handle." She broke up with him, but he wouldn't leave her alone. She lived "in a constant state of fear," she told the students.

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News

'Talk to someone': Peabody Magnet students warned about teen dating violence, sextortion



Melissa Gregory

Alexandria Town Talk

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Gasps rose from some of the freshmen and sophomores at Peabody Magnet High School after a woman identified herself as the one they had just heard screaming on a 911 call from June 7, 1993, the day her ex-boyfriend stabbed her repeatedly.

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The couple had dated briefly before Shackleford realized the relationship "was turning into something that was too much for me to handle." She broke up with him, but he wouldn't leave her alone. She lived "in a constant state of fear," she told the students.

Shackleford recovered from her injuries, and her ex was sent to prison for 66 years. She fought to keep him behind bars as he sought an early release. She was successful at first, but he later won his release.

He died less than two years after that, she said.

Shackleford's story was part of program to educate teens about dating violence, how to avoid it or get out of it. The NextStep of Louisiana program, based in Pineville, also touched on sextortion, the dangers of social media and harassment via texts.

The presentation is part of a Louisiana law that requires students in grades seven through 12 receive education on teen dating violence. The program has taught more than 37,000 students across six parishes and more than 30 schools at no cost to their districts.

Carolyn Hoyt, NextStep's founder and executive director, shared "a few terrible, heartbreaking examples" of young people who have been murdered or taken their own lives because of dating violence, sextortion or social media harassment.



Carolyn Hoyt, the founder and executive director of NextSTEP of Central Louisiana, talks to Peabody Magnet High School students about teen dating violence. *Melissa Gregory*

Like the 11-year-old boy who hung himself because he believed a prank played on him by his 13-year-old girlfriend and her friends. He believed the social media post that told everyone his girlfriend had committed suicide, but it wasn't true.

Hoyt says it shows victims aren't only girls.

"We always want guys to know, boys can be victims, too," she said.

In fact, her presentation states that sexortion victims overwhelmingly are teen boys. A video played for the students told the tale of two teen boys who killed themselves after being blackmailed by international criminals who lure them into sending explicit photos or videos by posing as young girls.

Then, the criminals demand money to prevent the photos or videos from being sent to their families and friends.

The FBI issued a warning about sextortion in January and since has made multiple arrests.

According to the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, dating violence is common. One in three high school students experience physical or sexual violence from their dating partners, it states.

Domestic violence is always about power and control, Hoyt told the students.

As she spoke on these topics, Temekia Brown nodded her head. Sitting next to



Paula Shackleford told Peabody Magnet High School students how the near fatal attack on her by an ex-boyfriend when she was 18 changed her life.
Melissa Gregory

Shackleford, Brown was the last speaker Monday morning.

But first, Peabody Principal Dennis Stewart wanted to tell them something.

"It hits home when you know someone," he said, telling them he knew Brown's daughter, Ashley Mortle, while he was at Arthur Smith Middle Magnet School.

She was a straight-A student "involved in everything possible," he told his students. He also knew Mortle's friend, Destiny Compton.

Both women died on Feb. 7, 2021, after being shot by Mortle's ex-boyfriend at Compton's Culpepper Road house in Alexandria. Mortle was one day from her 20th birthday; Compton, a dispatcher for the Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office, was 20.

Lawsuits: City, officer failed to protect women from man who

killed them hours later

"Listen, because these two young ladies were in this auditorium and walked these halls."

Brown said she didn't know the signs of dating violence before her daughter's death. But now, three years later, she realizes the signs were there all along.

Her daughter arranged for her iPhone contents to be uploaded to an iCloud account Brown had access to, and she only recently looked at it.

She read text messages in which her daughter's ex-boyfriend threatened to kill her, apologized to her and asked her to come back to him.

She now remembers other signs, like her daughter wearing long-sleeve sweaters during the summer. She began distancing herself from some friends. When Brown would ask if he was mistreating her, her daughter would deny it.



Temekia Brown tells Peabody Magnet High School students about her daughter, Ashley Mortle, and her best friend, Destiny Compton. The women were killed by Mortle's ex-boyfriend in 2021. *Melissa Gregory*

The last time she saw her daughter alive was at the Alexandria Police Department station, where she had gone to report her ex had stolen her cellphone and hit her. She asked her daughter why she never told her about what was going on, but also told her she was proud of her.

The two hugged and kissed as Mortle and her friends went out to celebrate her birthday. Less than two hours later, Brown received the call that that changed her life.

"All because she didn't want him anymore," she said. "She was tired of him."

"It is serious. It is OK for somebody not to want you. Walk away. When they tell you they're gonna do something to you, believe it. When they first put

their hands on you, believe it."

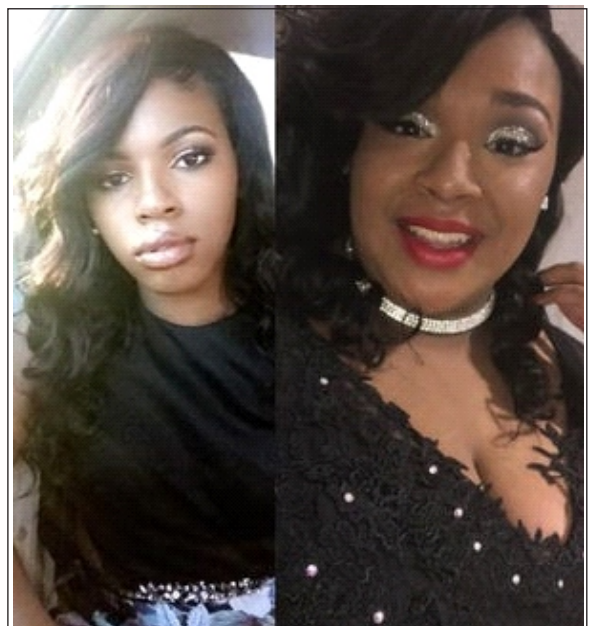
She urged them to talk to their parents if they're being abused and, if that's not an option, talk to a principal, teacher or pastor.

Brown said her goal now is to prevent other young women from going through what her daughter and Compton did. She founded a private group, Love Don't Hurt, that's on Facebook, providing a space for people to share their stories or seek help.

As she closed her talk, Brown told students that she never thought she'd have to bury her daughter - "My little best friend, my angel" -

because of dating violence.

"Don't take abuse from nobody," she said. "It's real. It's serious. Talk to somebody."



Ashley Mortle (left) and Destiny Compton
Courtesy/Jermaine Harris