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SATURDAY-SUNDAY, APRIL 18 - 19, 2026 | HOUMATODAY.COM

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Entergy proposal to power data center advances in state

Greg Hilburn
Shreveport Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Louisiana utility regulators approved a fast-track timeline for Entergy to seek final approval to build seven new power plants to fuel Meta's massive \$27 billion artificial intelligence data center project in Richland Parish. Members of the Louisiana Public Service Commission voted 4-1 April 15 at its meeting at the Bentley Hotel in Alexandria to allow Entergy to advance its

application as part of what's known as the "lightning initiative" for a compressed timeline. Regulators will make a final decision on Entergy's "lightning initiative" at its December meeting, but Wednesday's vote allows Entergy to bypass a formal recommendation from an administrative law judge. Public Service Commissioner Foster Campbell, a Democrat from Elm Grove whose district includes Richland Parish, made the motion for Entergy to proceed.

"I'm for it 1,000%," Campbell told USA Today Network. Alaina DiLaura of Alliance for Affordable Energy testified against fast-tracking PSC approval, calling it "premature" to wave any analysis for a project with "a scale so enormous." But Republican Public Service Commissioner Jean-Paul Coussan of Lafayette defended the time line, saying, "Only in government is eight months considered rushed."

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Bills would study TOPS return on investment

Sheridan White
LSU MANSHIP SCHOOL NEWS SERVICE

BATON ROUGE — A House committee advanced bills Tuesday that would study the return on investment of the TOPS scholarship program and potentially reclaim money from students who drop out or fail. House Resolution 17, presented by Rep. Christopher Turner, R-Ruston, authorizes a study to determine whether or not TOPS is delivering enough value to justify the state's \$320 million annual



Turner

price tag. The study would bring together the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, Louisiana Economic Development and the Kathleen Blanco Public Policy Center. Using decades of data, the review would examine whether TOPS recipients remain in Louisiana, what they earn and whether they enter high-demand industries.

See TOPS, Page 6A

Louisiana alligator season on the way



These two Louisiana alligators are sunning on a cypress tree in Lake Martin near Breaux Bridge on Nov. 11, 2022. GREG HILBURN/USA TODAY NETWORK

Greg Hilburn
Shreveport Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

A bill that would create a recreational hunting season for alligators in Louisiana moved closer to final passage April 14 after it cleared a House committee with no opposition. Franklin state Sen. Robert Allain's Senate Bill 244 would authorize the Louisiana Wildlife Commission to create a recreational season that would be open to 5,000 hunters annually, each with a two-gator limit. "I like alligators; I like to eat them and

I like to wear them," Republican Greenwell Spring Rep. Lauren Ventrella said during debate in the House Natural Resources Committee. Ventrella, Allain and Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Secretary Tyler Bosworth all said Louisiana's exploding population is threatening pets and people as their footprint expands. "We have an alligator population problem," said Allain, noting a 12-year-old New Orleans boy was attacked by an alligator in 2025 and died from drowning. Louisiana's alligator population has grown from fewer than 100,000 five

decades ago to more than 3 million today. Of those, about 2 million are wild, with another 1 million farmed. That's at least twice the population in Florida, the state with the second most number of alligators. And their Louisiana numbers have grown throughout the state, where they can be commonly spotted from Lake Martin in Breaux Bridge to Caddo and Cross lakes in Shreveport to Caldwell Parish in northeastern Louisiana. "In addition to population control, this fits well with (Gov. Jeff Landry's

See ALLIGATORS, Page 3A

Cassidy outlines plan to cut health costs

Ian Robinson
Shreveport Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Republican Louisiana U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy introduced his plan Tuesday to lower the cost of families' health care and make food healthier for children by limiting ultra-processed items. Cassidy said the key to lowering out-of-pocket health costs for American families is giving out an advanced refundable tax credit to families through a health savings account that they can use as they need.



Cassidy

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Volume 148 | No. 92
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