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2026  
LEGISLATURE  
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

## Council a step closer to controlling S&WB

Bill granting that authority advances to House floor



STAFF PHOTO BY JAVIER GALLEGOS

New Orleans Mayor Helena Moreno speaks during a House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs meeting at the State Capitol on Wednesday.

BY BEN MYERS  
Staff writer

A bill that grants the New Orleans City Council broad authority over the Sewerage & Water Board breezed through a state House committee on Wednesday, clearing its first major hurdle in a lengthy legislative process.

House Bill 573, sponsored by state Rep. Stephanie Hilferty, R-New Orleans, gives the council the power to exercise authority over all aspects of the utility's funding and opera-

tions, including the hiring of the executive director and all other S&WB employees.

The bill is supported by Mayor Helena Moreno and all seven members of the City Council. Moreno, who has complained she has little say over the board's makeup or management, showed up to the House Municipal Affairs Committee to praise the measure before the committee's unanimous vote in favor of it.

"This agency has been broken for way too long. We keep doing things the same and expecting a different

outcome," Moreno said.

The bill also gives City Hall leeway to take over the drainage system, although it doesn't set up a process for doing so, a little more than a year after all drainage operations were consolidated within the S&WB as part of a 2024 state law.

The Moreno administration didn't answer directly when asked if there are any plans to shift control of the drainage system.

"The mayor has long believed that

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## State could dismantle DCFS amid criticism

Bill would divide department among different agencies

BY ALYSE PFEIL  
Staff writer

After years of frustration about child deaths from abuse and neglect in Louisiana, a state lawmaker wants to dismantle the Department of Children and Family Services, moving some of its functions into the health department and others into law enforcement agencies.

Sen. Patrick McMath, R-Covington, unveiled the plan in Senate Bill 462 during a Wednesday meeting of the Senate health committee, which he chairs.

Louisiana faces problems with "child welfare and, in particular, child deaths," McMath said, and the state's child welfare apparatus needs "significant, foundational" change.

"There is a unique opportunity here and a true desire to fix what is a broken system," he said. "If we don't, children will continue to die at an unacceptable pace in Louisiana."

But hours after McMath unveiled the plan, Gov. Jeff Landry gave it a frosty reception.

"It's hard for me to know if I support it or not. Nobody talked to me about it," Landry said in a brief interview. "I'm extremely frustrated with the Senate and with Sen. McMath."

Louisiana senators have long complained that the child welfare agency isn't adequately protecting abused and neglected children. They've said that too many kids are dying in the hands of caregivers, even after potential dangers were previously flagged to the state.

McMath's proposed overhaul broadly includes three major changes.



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SEN. PATRICK  
McMATH,  
R-Covington

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## LIV Golf event up in the air

\$7M in state funding pledged to tournament

BY STEPHANIE RIEGEL  
and MARCO CARTOLANO  
Staff writer

The future of the LIV Golf Tournament planned for New Orleans this summer is up in the air, following questions that surfaced Wednesday about the financial viability of the Saudi Arabian-backed tournament.

Multiple financial publications reported Wednesday that Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, under pressure from the Iran war, is considering pulling its support

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STAFF FILE PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

Work continues on the \$27 billion Meta data center in Holly Ridge.

## Meta seeks power for data center expansion

Entergy gets OK to speed up approval process for new plants

BY JOSIE ABUGOV  
Staff writer

Plans for a huge expansion of Meta's Louisiana data center took their first steps before Louisiana electricity regulators on Wednesday, with Entergy granted an initial green light for an expedited approval process to build seven more gas-fired power plants for the project.

The expansion adds to what was already expected to be Meta's largest AI data center worldwide, being built in northeastern Louisiana at a cost of some \$27 billion. The seven new power plants would be in addition to three already ap-

proved for the project.

Approval from the state's Public Service Commission would enable Entergy to generate 7,400 megawatts in total for the tech company with its 10 gas-fired plants, the equivalent of over half of all power it currently produces statewide. It is also requesting 2,500 megawatts of solar and wind energy, as well as an upgrade to existing nuclear sites.

Four out of the five elected regulators voted in favor of Entergy's proposal for an advanced timeline, agreeing to cast a final vote on the new power plan in December, roughly eight months after the utility filed the application. The commissioners also sided with Entergy to forego a formal recommendation from an administrative judge, a typical procedure, but one

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