



# The Times-Picayune

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## Levee police chief contract questioned

Board president says Rondeno allowed to set his own terms

BY ALEX LUBBEN  
Staff writer

New Orleans' flood protection board allowed its police chief to draft his own employment contract, the board's president acknowledged Wednesday, disclosing new details of a highly favorable deal that is drawing scrutiny

from state legislators. The comments at a state Senate hearing add to more than a year of turbulence at the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East, the agency that maintains the New Orleans area's \$14.5 billion hurricane protection system. Since Gov. Jeff Landry began reshaping its leadership, seven

board members have resigned, and the flood control agency's police force has seen its budget grow by nearly 50%. The revelation that the police chief penned his own contract came during a meeting of the Senate and Governmental Affairs Committee, which convened for confirmation hearings for seven

board members. Senators used the opportunity to grill board President Peter Vicari over recent changes, including the new contract for Police Chief Joshua Rondeno.



Rondeno

An initial version of the contract would have granted Rondeno a 12-year term and made him eligible

for 6% annual raises. It would have also given Rondeno four years' pay if the board fired him without cause — and maintained his eligibility for 6% annual raises even after termination.

If that contract had been paid out, Rondeno could have collected up to \$910,000 in severance pay.

"I've never seen that. Lane Kiffin would love to have that contract,"

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## La.'s historically Black colleges at risk of losing millions



STAFF FILE PHOTO BY JAVIER GALLEGOS

Students walk to class at Southern University in Baton Rouge.

### Trump's anti-DEI order means redistribution of money

BY HALEY MILLER  
Staff writer

As President Donald Trump's administration moves to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives at U.S. universities, Louisiana's higher education board is cutting an incentive that encouraged universities to graduate more minority students.

The change means the state's historically Black colleges and universities stand to lose millions of dollars.

"I'm not going to lie, because the numbers are out there," interim Southern University system President Orlando McMeans said. "It will put us in the red as it relates to funding for 2026-27."

The Louisiana Board of Regents doles out money from

#### Institutions with greatest losses

The top five public universities and colleges in Louisiana that lost the most in total estimated formula calculations for fiscal year 2025 after the underrepresented minority metric was removed.

Institution	Dollars WITH underrepresented minority completers	Dollars WITHOUT underrepresented minority completers	Loss
Southern University and A&M College	\$24,947,310	\$23,878,973	▼\$1,068,337
Grambling State University	\$16,403,133	\$15,503,849	▼ \$899,284
Southern University in New Orleans	\$6,089,260	\$5,791,344	▼ \$297,916
Baton Rouge Community College	\$20,643,638	\$20,360,457	▼ \$283,181
Delgado Community College	\$32,692,613	\$32,485,279	▼ \$207,334

Source: Louisiana Board of Regents

Staff graphic

the Legislature to the state's public colleges and universities based on a complex formula. For the new fiscal year that starts July 1, that formula

will no longer include an "underrepresented minority completer" metric, which rewarded institutions for graduating students of races with lower

graduation rates than the rest of the population.

Kim Hunter Reed,

➤ See **MILLIONS**, page 8A

## Jefferson sees spike in school bus issues

Students stranded amid driver shortage

BY ELYSE CARMOSINO  
Staff writer

Hundreds of Jefferson Parish students have been left scrambling to find a way to school following a recent spate of bus delays and cancellations due to what district officials say is an ongoing driver shortage.

Dozens of bus routes were canceled each day in March, and many others had interrupted service resulting in late pickups and drop-offs, according to Jefferson Parish schools data.

Some parents say they've had to take time off work to drive their children to school, while others say their kids missed classes or entire school days due to the bus disruptions, causing students to fall behind in learning or go without school-provided meals. "My kids miss school if a bus doesn't come to get them in the morning," said Nevada Prewitt, whose three children attend Rudolph Matas Elementary School in Metairie.

About 40,000 Jefferson Parish students rely on buses that travel nearly 1,700 routes across the district, Louisiana's largest. An average of nearly 5% of those routes — about 80 per day — were canceled each day in March, according to an analysis of the district's data.

Nearly 80% of the district's 74 schools had at least one bus route canceled that same month, data shows. Many schools — including Bunche Elementary and Bonabel, East Jefferson, West Jefferson and Riverdale high schools — had some routes canceled nearly every day.

The cancellations involved district school buses and ones operated by

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