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THE TOWN TALK

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ALEXANDRIA-PINEVILLE, LOUISIANA

Report: Baton Rouge ranks among worst capital cities



Baton Rouge ranked number 47 on WalletHub's list of the best state capitals to live in, making it the fourth-worst capital city in the U.S. GREG HILBURN/USA TODAY NETWORK

WalletHub study finds high rates of poverty and crime

Presley Bo Tyler
Shreveport Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

While capitals are not always the biggest city in a state, they are centers of government and typically have strong economic landscapes.

Capital cities are also often rich in cultural scenes, and sometimes rank among the best places to live in the U.S.

However, this is not always the case, but WalletHub has set out to find which state capitals are the best places to live by analyzing cities based on affordability, economic stability, quality of life, education and health care.

While Louisiana's state capital, Baton Rouge, is not the state's largest city, it does boast a population of between 224,000 and 227,470 residents and is a major economic hub.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana ranked number 47 on WalletHub's list of the best state capitals to live in, making it the fourth-worst capital city in the U.S.

Additionally, Baton Rouge ranked 38th for affordability, 47th for economic well-being, 39th for quality of education and health, as well as 37th for quality of life.

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LA bans buying candy and soda on SNAP

Greg Hilburn
Shreveport Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Louisianans who receive food assistance through SNAP can no longer use food stamps to buy soda, candy and energy drinks under new restrictions that went into effect on Ash Wednesday.

New rules on what food and drinks can be bought through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Louisiana had been scheduled to take place Jan. 1, 2026, but the U.S. Department of Agriculture gave the state permission to delay the restrictions until the beginning of Lent.

The changes come as Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry and the Legislature have fully embraced U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy's "Make America Healthy Again" movement.

Landry and Kennedy have said the goal of the MAHA movement in Louisiana is to improve general health and prevent chronic diseases that Landry believes will result in reducing the state's Medicaid health insurance costs.

"This is about getting Louisiana healthy again, which is in coordination with the president's effort to Make America Healthy Again," Landry said on podcast last year. "Snickers is not for lunch."

Twenty percent of Louisiana's population, about 850,000 people, receive SNAP benefits. The largest number of those are in East Baton Rouge, Orleans,

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Feds look into LA's higher education DEI policies

Greg Hilburn
Shreveport Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

The U.S. Department of Education has launched an investigation into whether Louisiana's higher education board has violated the Civil Rights Act with its diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives included in the Board of Regents' master plan.

Federal officials in the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights said the regents' executive budgets from Fiscal Year 2021-2021 and Fiscal Year 2025-2026 appear to "blatantly violate" the law by authorizing racially exclusionary practices and initiatives.

Specifically, the investigation says, the board's stated goal is to "increase the unduplicated number of underrepresented minorities (all races other

than white, Asian)" earning a degree or credential "in a given academic year."

"The Louisiana Board of Regents' objective to prioritize recruitment and graduation efforts for 'all races other than white [and] Asian' appears to blatantly violate not only America's anti-discrimination laws, but our nation's core principles," said assistant secretary for civil rights Kimberly Richey in a statement.

"Title VI guarantees all students equal access to educational programs and opportunities regardless of race, and OCR is committed to preserving these rights. OCR will fully enforce Title VI to ensure our education programs are defined by equality, not exclusion."

President Donald Trump's U.S. Education Secretary Linda McMahon said

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Sen. Sam Jenkins recalls meeting Rev. Jackson

Ian Robinson
Shreveport Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Louisiana State Sen. Sam Jenkins (D-Shreveport) issued a statement Tuesday following the death of renowned civil rights activist the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Jackson, who marched alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., later emerged as a national political force in his own right — two historic bids for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988 and founding the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition to advance civil rights and economic justice.

Jackson also participated in high-profile diplomatic efforts, negotiating the 1983 release of a U.S. pilot held in Syria and securing the freedom of 22 Americans and 26 political prisoners in



State Sen. Sam Jenkins, right, with Rev. Jesse Jackson at the Louisiana State Capitol in 2022. PROVIDED BY SAM JENKINS

Cuba.

Even in his later years, he remained active in protests, being arrested twice in 2021 while protesting against the U.S. Senate's filibuster rule.

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