

Legislature to recognize group for fight against - Times-Picayune, The: Web Edition Articles (New Orleans, LA) - May 21, 2013

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After leading a grassroots campaign that ended tolls on the **Crescent City Connection** for good, members of Stop the Tolls head to Baton Rouge Tuesday (May 21) to be honored by the state Legislature. Mike Teachworth, founder of the group, and his attorney, G. Patrick Hand III, are scheduled to be lauded on the floor of the House when it convenes at 2 p.m.

State Rep. Pat Connick, R-Harvey, said the recognition is well deserved for "challenging the status quo and eliminating waste in government."

"The work of the Stop the Tolls organization was unprecedented and proves that when ordinary citizens come together for the right cause, and for the right reasons, great things can and will happen," Connick said in an email announcing the recognition ceremony.

In a May 4 landslide, voters rejected a measure that would have imposed tolls on the bridge for 20 years. It was the second election on the issue, after Teachworth of Harvey sued over the outcome of the initial controversial referendum in November that approved the toll extension by just 18 votes out of more than 308,000 cast.

A judge in March ordered a new election, siding with Teachworth that some voters were wrongly denied the right to vote on the issue when they were given federal provisional ballots. Upon the ruling setting the second referendum, the tolls were suspended.

Tuesday's recognition could also coincide with a vote in the Senate on an amendment by state Sen. Edwin Murray, D-New Orleans, to speed up refunds of money left in CCC toll tag accounts. The amendment says "any funds remaining in all **Crescent City Connection** GeauxPass toll tag accounts that are clearly identified by name and address shall be deemed abandoned funds for the purposes of treatment as unclaimed property" and transferred to the state treasury.

In a YouTube video, Murray said the Transportation Department's refund process "seems to be a bit cumbersome" but the state treasurer's unclaimed property procedure could refund the money much faster.

Transportation Secretary Sherri LeBas has said that between \$3 million and \$4 million was collected from Jan. 1 until the tolls were suspended March 5.

Last year, east bank bound drivers paid nearly \$20 million to cross the river, auditors said.

Correction: An earlier version of this article incorrectly reported that \$5 million was collected between Jan. 1 and March 5, when the tolls were suspended.