

House OKs bill creating board for Lakefront - Times-Picayune, The (New Orleans, LA) - June 19, 2010 - page A 04

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BATON ROUGE -- The House gave unanimous support Friday to a bill that would create a new 13-member board to run Lakefront Airport but determined that its members should not be paid for meetings.

Lawmakers voted 94-0 for Senate Bill 772 by Sen. J.P. Morrell, D-New Orleans, who agreed earlier to have his bill amended to prohibit House and Senate members who represent the area around the airport from sitting on the board.

The amendment, offered by Rep. Nita Hutter, R-Chalmette, was shot down 23-67 after Rep. Cedric Richmond, D-New Orleans, who lives near the airport, objected.

Richmond argued that important decisions have to be made about Lakefront Airport and seven House and Senate members should have a voice in that. He said that Baton Rouge area lawmakers have seats on the board that runs Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport and New Orleans lawmakers should have the same authority.

Hutter amended the bill to allow three citizens to be named by the presidents of four civic associations in the area. The other members of the proposed Lakefront Airport Authority include officials of the Orleans Levee District and the airport.

She also amended it to prohibit up to a \$50-per-meeting stipend but allowed reimbursement of mileage.

The bill calls for the proposed authority to take over the airport facility from the state Jan. 1, and charges the board to conduct a nationwide search for a management company to run the airport's day-to-day operations.

Rep. Patrick Connick, R-Harvey, tried to amend the bill to create a separate board to take over the **Crescent City Connection** from the state transportation agency. He said the proposed bridge authority should look into extending or ending the tolls, and turning the bridge police over to State Police.

Speaker Pro Tem Joel Robideaux, I-Lafayette, ruled the amendment was out of order, prompting Connick to take the rare step of asking the House to overrule Robideaux's ruling. Lawmakers upheld the ruling 86-9.

Morrell's bill must return to the Senate for approval of the House changes.

The House also amended then approved 91-0 Morrell's Senate Bill 804 that sets up a separate Non-Flood Protection Asset Management Authority to oversee the former levee district assets -- other than the airport -- now overseen by the state, such as green spaces, shopping centers and

marinas.

Morrell's bill sets up at least a 15-member authority and places it in the transportation department from Aug. 15 through Jan. 1, 2012. After that time, the authority would exist as an independent agency and would decide how to sell, lease or operate the non-flood assets of the former district.

Rep. Nick Lorusso, R-New Orleans, who handled Morrell's bill on the floor, said that the makeup of the authority roughly mirrors a special task force Gov. Bobby Jindal has in place to study how to dispose of the assets.

The commission outlined in the bill would be comprised of House and Senate members or their appointees, city officials or their nominees as well as representatives of civic and environmental groups.

The proposed authority would not be eligible to receive any state transportation money. Morrell said earlier in the session the authority could decide to sell or turn over the operations of the non-flood assets to the city of New Orleans.

Morrell said that the state is not spending any money to oversee the non-flood assets because revenues from the district and a financial court settlement involving a long-departed gambling boat that used to be a tenant of the district are being used.

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