



Bobby Jindal

Louisiana Gubernatorial Inaugural Address



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AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio

President Chaisson, Speaker Tucker, statewide elected officials, Chief Justice Calogero and Justices of the Supreme Court; Members of the legislature; Governor Treen, Governor Foster, Governor Roemer, Governor Blanco, Governor Perry; Senator Landrieu and Senator Vitter; Congressman McCrery, Congressman Boustany, Melancon, Congressman Alexander; my beautiful wife, Supriya, my children, my family; honored guests, friends, my fellow Louisianians:

It is with gratitude in my heart and determination in my spirit that I stand before you today. Thanks be to Almighty God.

It is great to be with you today, a milestone on what is a long and important journey. We come to the steps of this historic Capitol today to celebrate, celebrate not just an election, but a new beginning. We're not here for one man to take an oath, but for one people to make commitments to each other. We are here not to inaugurate one administration opposite from those before, but to set forth together, all of us, towards a new era. For reasons none of us can understand or even fully appreciate, history has placed all of us -- every living Louisianian, those within her borders and without -- in a position previous generations could only envy.

Under the spotlight of the world, with generosity from many and a clear call to common purpose, we have the opportunity to make lasting and positive change. We have the opportunity to make this change not over the course of decades, but in short order.



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We have the opportunity to affect not just our own children's lives, but the lives of Louisiana children yet to be born. We have the opportunity -- born of tragedy but embraced still the same -- to make right decades of failure in government.

You've often heard me say, we don't live in a poor state; we've had a state with poor leadership; that we do not have a state stuck in the past, but leaders who were unconcerned with the future. If we are honest with ourselves, we can all agree that too many of those stereotypes rang true. In our past, too many of our politicians looked out for themselves. Too many arms of state and local government did not get results. And the world took note. Those stereotypes cost us credibility. They cost us investment. They cost us jobs.

Let us all resolve today -- Democrats and Republicans, North Louisiana and South, leaders of all races and all religions, elected and unelected -- let us all resolve that era ends today.

We can build a Louisiana where our leaders and our people set the highest standards and hold every member of our government accountable; a Louisiana where incompetence is not a synonym for government; a Louisiana where corruption does not hold us back. That is why I'm asking for your help in the next few months. We must win a war on corruption and incompetence in government. It cannot be the last thing we do. It cannot be the second or third thing we do. It must be the first thing we do, starting today. Our biggest obstacle in the past must become our first victory towards a brighter future.

Today, I'm here to tell you that on February 10th -- just weeks from today -- I will call the legislature into special session to consider comprehensive ethics reform. And I need your help to insist that we get the job done. We will come to this Capitol to make a clean break with the past; to give Louisiana the highest standards for accountability anywhere in the nation; to take our government 180 degrees from the darkest chapters of its past.

When we have accomplished ethics reform, we will move next to economic reform. For too long our regulations, our burdensome taxes, have driven away job-makers instead of attracting them. Our workforce training has stayed grounded in the economy of a century now past. That too must change. We have great workers. We have great people, with a great work ethic that is part of our culture. It is time for our state government to catch up, so that there is no weak link in our appeal to employers looking to grow. I will ask our legislature this year to re-orient our workforce training to meet the challenges and skills required by the global economy. And our administration will streamline its demand of job-makers. Our message will be clear: If you want to grow your company, Louisiana wants to grow with you -- with a guarantee that state government will be your ally, and that our workers will be ready to do your high-skill jobs on their very first day.

These reforms are essential to our turnaround. We cannot settle for cosmetic change. And we all must recognize the stakes. When we succeed, the world will take note. They will take note in the laboratories of Silicon Valley. They will take note in the board rooms of Wall Street. And they will take note in the living rooms scattered across Houston and Atlanta and Dallas -- where former Louisianians now live, many of them our best and brightest, in exile from an uncertain future at home. We must bring them home.



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That capital, that energy, those assets: They are all poised to come to Louisiana and help us remake our economy. If we make a clean start, they will come. In some ways, this focus on ethics is meant to be a beacon.

And we must light that beacon to inspire Louisianians everywhere, whether they live in Monroe or Manhattan, Franklinton or Florida, Tensas or Texas. You see, the fire and drive of Louisianians -- they're the only things that can power our rebirth.

Fortunately, we are blessed. It is possible that there has never been a more creative group of people than the group called Louisianians. No one anywhere in the world doubts our talents, our creative energy. They wait in lines to listen to our music. They revere our athletes. (Geaux Tigers!) They marvel at our state's film and visual arts. They envy our celebrations and flock to them every year. And they all try to imitate our cuisine. Across the entire civilized world, when it comes to culture, the word "Louisiana" stands for innovation and quality. Those talents, given by God and nurtured by a community that values creativity, will enable us to turn our state around.

Wherever you are today hearing my voice, to my fellow Louisianians -- those gathered here at the Capitol, to those inside our borders and outside -- I ask you to come home. Come home in person; or send home your commitment. Make Louisiana's rebirth your own priority. If you're a Louisiana small business owner trying to get started, stick it out another year. If you own companies in other states, grow your business here. If you teach in our schools, if you serve your community, redouble your efforts. Join in our cause. Make every day not just a job but a mission. With clarity of purpose and commitment to our pursuit, we will not fail.

And let me be clear exactly about the kind of New Louisiana I envision. I don't speak of a state that simply rebuilds to where we were before the storms. The truth is, too many of our schools were failing before the storms. Our roads were substandard before the storms. Our economy was behind, before the storms. And now, for reasons beyond our earthly comprehension, this opportunity, this mandate, has been placed on our generation. We must rise to this challenge.

Our goal is a New Louisiana where success is shared by all Louisianians: not just our cities, not just our suburbs, not just one group or one class -- but everyone who believes in Louisiana. A vibrant economy and high-performing schools are things that every Louisiana community deserves, from the Delta to the Bayou. This Louisiana will not come easily, but it will come. It can happen. It can change. It must change. It will change.

To Congressman McCrery, I want to thank you for those heartfelt remarks. I want to thank you for your friendship, for your service to our great state. To governor Foster, the other governors assembled here, I want to thank you for your service to our state. To governor Blanco, to coach Blanco, I want to thank to your service to our state during perhaps the most difficult and trying times we could ever imagine in our lifetimes. I want to thank you for your service and your graciousness.



To my parents, to my wife, to my children and my family, I thank you for your support and your prayers. To president Chaisson, speaker Tucker, the Members of the legislature, I look forward to working with you in partnership to delivering the New Louisiana our citizens so richly deserve and so strongly demand.

I will close by offering you this reflection: Two centuries ago, Louisiana was the economic focal point of the entire country. Just as the water of the rivers in America flowed to Louisiana, so flowed the harvest of America to Louisiana. It built one of the world's great cities, and a magnet for entrepreneurs and innovators and capitalists. In today's world, the great harvest in our economy is not measured in bushels and bales, but in brainpower. In the knowledge-based economy of this century, investment and opportunity flow to places where the workforce is prepared, the business climate welcoming. In short, the opportunities flow to places focused on the future and driven to do something about it.

That is how we will run our New Louisiana government:

- Twenty-first century schools and colleges.
- Curricula linked to our new economy.
- Quality teachers.
- Accountability for results.
- A business climate second to none, that rewards risk-takers, welcomes entrepreneurs.
- A government ready to help and efficient enough to get out of the way.
- Infrastructure to take advantage of our resources.
- A modern health care system that provides for all.
- And a safe quality of life where you can raise children in peace.

Our New Louisiana will be a magnet for the dreamers, the risk-takers, the adventurers, the leaders of America's new economy. That Louisiana, that New Louisiana will give our citizens the opportunities they deserve. That is the kind of reform we will bring. That is our goal. That is our charge. I've said it before and I'll say it once more again: We can change. We must change. We will change.

Thank you! God Bless you! God Bless the Great State of Louisiana!