

## Never Surrender

From the earliest days of the creation of these United States, tribal governments have taken an active role in the defense of their right to exist, to maintain their identities, and to provide for their people. These efforts have taken many forms over the years, and have met with various levels of success and many levels of failure. Today, your tribe, the Tunica-Biloxi, is working hard to exercise and strengthen its advocacy efforts on your behalf. Unlike in those early years of the Republic, however, today we use the same tools and strategies of the most powerful political and economic forces. Today, we are insiders. Today, we fight for, and we fight on, a level playing field.

In our democratic system of government decision makers must not only act on policy that is beneficial to their constituents, they must also win the battle to prove to their voters that their decisions were correct, appropriate and wise. The victors of these conflicts are ultimately determined on Election Day, but the outcomes are often decided long before then in battles that are carried out across every form of communication - most of which require monetary resources in order to use effectively. As a result, while voters ultimately make the final decisions, their choices are almost always predetermined by efforts of those with resources to devote to the campaigns of the candidates they support.

Decades ago, Tunica tribal leaders would travel to Washington, DC to petition government officials with little more than passion and an argument to compassion and fairness. Today, your tribal leaders are not content to fight policy battles on your behalf with their hands tied behind them. Today, they are using the same tools and strategies used by the Nation's most effective businesses and interest groups. They are focused and determined to ensure that your rights and the ability of the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe to exist for your benefit are secured for generations to come.

Recognizing what is at risk, and with a vision for the future prosperity of the Tribe, your tribal leaders are actively engaging in the political battles in Washington. Issues that directly impact the ability of the tribe to

generate revenue are critical to the Tribe's ability to deliver services and economic security to tribal citizens. These include passage of the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act which will protect the tribe's right to hire and fire employees on its own terms without outside interference; financial services reform which threatens to upend the online lending enterprise which is delivering real value to the tribal treasury; and health care reform which might reduce health care services available to both tribal citizens and tribal employees.

While economic considerations are critical, so too are those issues that allow the Tribe to define itself as it chooses and to protect its culture. So, in addition to the issues above, the tribe fights to keep the tribal provisions of the Historic Preservation Act, and to improve federal agency compliance; for protection of sacred sites, for the ability to place land into trust where we have an historic tie, and for programs to preserve and promote learning of native languages.

In 2016, we made great progress to secure a bright future for the Tribe. At the direction of your Chairmen and Tribal Council, and with the active efforts of your Political Director, David Rivas and his team, we secured support from a host of the most influential leaders in Washington. Mr. Rivas and Members of the Council, with support from other senior executives of tribal enterprises, brought these and other issues to the direct attention of key Members of Congress both in Washington, and in Louisiana. Some of these include: House Majority Leader Scalise (R-LA), House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Senate Indian Affairs Committee Chairman John Barrasso (R-WY), the Ranking Member of the House Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-MS), and the Representative whose district includes the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe reservation, Rep. Ralph Abraham (R-LA), among many others. These meetings, backed by the resources of the Tribe, provide a signal to the entire establishment in Washington that the Tribe will defend its interests to the end and will never surrender.

*Eric Tober is a Partner at Cornerstone Government Affairs in Washington, D.C. He holds a B.A. from the University of Lafayette and an MBA from Georgetown University.*

**TBIPAC**  
The Tunica-Biloxi  
Tribe of Louisiana



# Newsletter

January 2017

## Letter from the PAC Director

Recently I was asked why do PAC's exist and why do tribes need a PAC. There are many who don't understand the fundamental reasons and objectives. Simply put, it is the legal mechanism that has been put in place that allows for tribes, special interest groups and other organizations to contribute to federal candidates and state officials. These funds are utilized to run for public office. The dollars that are raised by the PAC can be instrumental in defending and protecting the interest of the tribe against anyone who might try to derail or take advantage of the tribe's ability to continue moving forward.

Campaign finance is an interesting subject whether needed to fund election issues or referendum. We as an Indian tribe constantly have to protect our interest in Washington D.C. and in our state capital Baton Rouge. The task is daunting at times and at present there are many challenges and other interests that threaten our tribe. Without failure every year there is some form of legislation or bill that is drafted that tries to erode tribal sovereignty or do away with it completely. In addition there are other enterprises and other corporations that seek to take advantage over tribal enterprises.

Tribal governments across the United States are becoming more proactive in their efforts to fight state and federal laws that threaten our very existence. There are some who believe that we should allow someone else to take on our battles or that if you turn away it will go away. The Tunica-Biloxi tribe has always taken an active role in defending the tribe's sovereignty. The leadership realized early on that in order to have an opportunity we must create it -- whether throughout economic development or seeking



**Governor Edwards and David Rivas**

opportunities through federal and state law. We must not only protect our sovereignty - must use our sovereignty status to develop financial benefit for the families of The Tunica-Biloxi tribe. This requires us to always be in the political forefront and be able to reach out to elected officials so that we can protect our interest and procure needed opportunities.

I appreciate the opportunity to be our PAC Director and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions - want more information - or want to assist with our tribal political efforts.

The Time Is Now



**Mike Strain Fall Ball 2016**  
Top Row - Cindy Torian and David Rivas  
Bottom Row - Susan Strain, Mike Strain,  
and Jessica Barbry

## CHAIRMAN JOEY P. BARBRY

Just when you think you have seen and heard it all in politics - more surprises come our way.

Democrat John Bel Edwards won the Louisiana Governor's race - the first Democrat to win a statewide race in Louisiana in a long time. And then U.S. Senator David Vitter decides to give up a U.S. Senate seat he has held for three terms! And now we have what many would consider the most controversial race ever for the Presidency of the United States.

The ever-changing world of politics and government shows us why now more than ever our tribe must stay in touch and involved in every way. Elections matter because those elected into these offices are the individuals we must work with as we protect our sovereignty and further develop our economic opportunities.

Your tribal leadership will be watching these elections closely and meeting with candidates to share our concerns about issues important to us. We should support campaigns and candidates that listen to and understand the needs and issues of the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe and it's enterprises. And we should op-

pose candidates and campaigns that do not take the time to either learn about issues or oppose tribal sovereignty and tribal goals.

Please take the time to carefully scrutinize the positions taken by candidates for office this fall. The Unites States Senate plays a very important role in Native American issues - tribal sovereignty and many other tribal matters end up before the Supreme Court. The examination and confirmation of nominees for the U.S. Supreme Court by the Senate is very critical to all of us in Indian country. Please join me in making sure the next U.S. Senator from Louisiana respects and understands our importance to Louisiana - providing good jobs for families in our state and looking for more economic opportunities for the future.

I still believe that politicians respond to people. The special interest groups and lobbyist definitely have an impact. But when voters speak out and let candidates know how they feel - it absolutely makes an impact. Please stay active and informed as we all work to successfully influence the political process to protect our tribe and grow opportunities for our community.

If I can ever be of help to you or your family please don't hesitate to call on me.

## Political Update Courson Nickel, Bud Courson and Jim Nickel

State Representative John Bel Edwards, a Democrat, defeated Republican US Senator David Vitter for Governor in the fall of 2015. Vitter subsequently announced that he would not seek re-election to the US Senate. Both of these political developments were surprises to all who watched this race closely for over a year.

Govenor Elect Edwards got off to a bit of a rocky start as his handpicked leader for the Louisiana House of Representative failed to garner the votes need to be Speaker of the House. In a bit of a surprise Representative Taylor Barras, a Republican banker from New Iberia was selected by the House to serve as Speaker. Barras was not an ally of the Governor and therefore picked an entirely different group for Chairs of committees. Barras is the first "independently" elected Speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives.

Veteran lawmaker John Alario, a Republican, was re-elected as President of the Senate and has been working closely with the Govenor on many issues. Senator Eric LaFleur, a Democrat from Ville Platte, and the Senator who represents the district where the Tunica Biloxi tribe is located is Chairman of the very important Senate Finance Committee.

The only issue to truly grab everyone's attention in Baton Rouge has been the budget. Governor Edwards and the Legislature were faced with an immediate budget shortfall of over a billion dollars. Tax increases on tobacco, alcohol, businesses and individuals were passed during the first special session of the Legislature. Following the Regular Session of the Legislature the Governor called another Special Session to attempt to raise more revenue.

The Second Special Session ended on June 23 with some new revenue raised but not enough to fully fund the very popular TOPS

scholarship program or the state hospital partners. The three combined sessions of this year have resulted in the Louisiana Legislature being in session more consecutive days in the 204 year history of the body. Legislators have returned to their districts for some rest and back to the full time jobs they hold when not in Baton Rouge.

The Tunica-Biloxi Tribe has been well represented throughout this political and legislative process. TBIPAC provided key financial support to legislative and statewide candidates in the fall. TBIPAC followed up that support with important contacts during all three of the legislative sessions.

The tribe was acknowledged for its important role in our state's history and its incredibly vital role in our state's economy by a Resolution unanimously passed by both chambers of the Legislature. Representative Robert Johnson in the House introduced David Rivas, TBIPAC Director, to great applause. Senator Eric LaFleur took a break in the Senate Finance Committee hearing to acknowledge Rivas as well. LaFleur eloquently explained to his colleagues that the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe is a very important economic and community asset in Central Louisiana.

TBIPAC also hosted a very successful Legislative Dinner in Baton Rouge. Many members of the House and Senate joined us for a great discussion about the tribe and its' important role in Louisiana. It was a great evening and one of the most well attended dinners in many years as both Republicans and Democrats from throughout the state joined us.

This fall we will see a very important race for the U.S. Senate. There are multiple candidates from both parties and TBIPAC and the Tunica-Biloxi tribal leadership will be very involved in assuring that all candidates know about the issues important to us.

We appreciate the opportunity to work for the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe and look forward to more political successes down the road.





## We Must Always Remain Relevant

We need to stay relevant in the political arena we live in. We must always be closely connected to any issues or concerns that affect Indian Country, especially those that affect the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe and its interest.

*Sidney Barbry, Jessica Barbry & David Rivas, Jr. in the Rotunda Room Tunica-Biloxi Legislative Day*

The Tunica-Biloxi  
Tribe of Louisiana



*David and Eric Tober discussing legislative issues in D.C.*



*Chris Barbry*



*Congressman Ralph Abraham*



*David Rivas*



*Judge Genovese*

**Team Prizes**



**Congressman Dan Kildee**



**Congressman Ralph Abraham**



**Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick**



**Congressman Boustany**



**Senator Roger Wicker**



**Senator Jerry Moran**



**Senator Heidi Heitkamp**



**2016 Presidential Debate**

**David Rivas, Jr. and Former Dallas Cowboy Emmitt Smith**

**Tunica Biloxi Legislative Day**



**David Rivas, Jessica and Sidney Barbry**



**Representatives Mark Abraham and Jack McFarland, Jessica Barbry**



**Representatives Andy Ander and Larry Bagley**

**Progression and Evolving**

Webster defines progression as a movement or development toward a destination or a more advanced state, especially gradually or in stages. We are gradually evolving from a simple to a more complex form.



**Representatives Robert Johnson and Gene Reynolds**



**Representative Terry Landry**



**Representatives Tanner Magee, Stephen Dwight and Jerome Zerigue**