



October 20, 2015

Dear Red River United Members and Retirees,

At this juncture, you have undoubtedly received countless calls, letters, and viewed numerous negative political advertisements. Our members are often the smartest people in the room, so I will not insult your intelligence with a slick campaign mailer. I also want to stick to a positive message and present factual points about the upcoming primary for governor, and **our endorsement of John Bel Edwards**.

There are many reasons to support John Bel, but our endorsement is exclusively due to his unwavering support and personal advocacy for public education, teachers, and school employees. I have heard from some members that they steer clear of politics, and while I respect your opinion, I also want to point out that everything about our job is political. Our salaries, resources, tenure, evaluations, and very job security are politically tied to state government. For this reason, and as your advocate at Red River United, I feel it is our responsibility to highlight the candidates that are most supportive of public education, educators, and school employees.

In this letter, I hope to detail the concrete and positive ways John Bel has demonstrated that he shares our educational values.

- For the past eight years, John Bel has been steadfast in his support for public education. Even when Governor Jindal's ratings were above 60%, John Bel was unafraid to say that the Jindal plan was bad for Louisiana. He has been a voice of reason standing against those who led the state to the brink of disaster.
- When the ill-conceived, unconstitutional schemes of 2012 were passed, John Bel was one of the heroes who actually read the legislation, did his own homework, and stood tall in defense of our constitution, our kids, teachers, and communities. When that session ended, John Bel was a key witness in our lawsuit against Act 2 and school vouchers. He also stood in opposition to Act 1:
 - Created a controversial and punitive evaluation system.
 - Restricted gaining and maintaining tenure.
 - Eliminated pay requirements for advanced degrees.
 - Dismantled seniority.
 - Stripped school boards of power and oversight.

- John Bel's leadership resulted in the only K-12 funding increase in seven years, \$140 million worth. Governor Jindal has not requested a single monetary increase for public education. In fact, John Bel held up the entire Louisiana state budget in order to secure pay raises for classroom teachers.
- In order to address the increasing poverty of our state retirees, John Bel co-authored HB 42, a COLA that would benefit our retired teachers. When Governor Jindal vetoed the bill, John Bel led a bi-partisan coalition supporting an override session.
- John Bel addressed ongoing inequitable distribution of funds for special education (SB 267), telling State Superintendent of Education John White, "It is never, ever legal to discriminate against special education students. It is never moral either."
- John Bel opposed the possibility of privatization of our public universities, stating "I will not allow our higher education system to be sacrificed on the alter of Bobby Jindal's personal political ambition."
- John Bel opposes the Common Core in its current form. He maintains that Common Core promotes an over-reliance on testing, and misinforms parents about the quality of their public schools (grade letters for schools).
- John Bel has publicly stated that he will not reappoint State Superintendent of Education John White.

John Bel Edwards is a leader. He is a graduate of West Point and a veteran Army Ranger company commander. He remains happily wed to his high school sweetheart, who is a Tangipahoa Parish public school teacher and union member. He has been a warrior for public education, he is the real deal, and he will make a great governor.

It is not every day that we have a candidate that so strongly shares our educational values. I hope that you will take this into consideration when casting your vote. The primary election is this upcoming Saturday, October 24. Polls are open from 7AM to 8PM. If you need any additional information on where you vote, or if you need a ride to the polls, please us a call at 318-424-4579.

Sincerely,

Jackie Lansdale
President, Red River United