

Bobby Jindal

Bobby Jindal (R-LA) was elected governor of Louisiana in 2007 and is running for reelection in 2011.

Gov. Jindal:

- Prevented the public release of government records and has fought legislation to make government more transparent
- Weakened the authority of the state ethics board
- Refused to accept federal stimulus funds to expand unemployment insurance and to fund other important programs
- Rewarded campaign donors with government jobs and contracts
- Has been fined for ethics violations

CHARGE ONE: TRANSPARENCY

During the 2009 legislative session, Gov. Jindal killed a bill that would have greatly expanded transparency in the governor's office.¹ House Bill 169 would have extended the Public Records Act to the governor's office and made most books, records, writings, accounts, letters and other executive branch communications available to the public on request.² Gov. Jindal said the bill would violate executive privilege and helped to kill it in committee.³

Instead, Gov. Jindal backed Senate Bill 278, a rival measure riddled with loopholes,⁴ but which became law on July 10, 2009.⁵ Gov. Jindal asserted the new law would increase government transparency, but opponents charged that it would forever seal some records regarding who and what influenced a governor's decisions.⁶

Gov. Jindal has voiced his opposition to legislation aimed at expanding access to records of the governor's office.⁷ During the 2010 legislative session, two state legislators introduced bills to strengthen the open records policy by making clear that gubernatorial records are public and creating narrow exceptions to shield specific documents from the public domain.⁸ One bill directs the governor's office to preserve records exempt from public disclosure and transfer them to the state archives at the end of the governor's tenure; the documents would become public 10

¹ Ed Anderson, Bill Would Open Governor's Office Documents to Public, *The Times-Picayune*, April 4, 2009; Marsha Shuler, Lawmakers Target Saints, Jindal *** Governor's Office Scrutiny Bill Quashed, *The Advocate*, April 30, 2009.

² Id.

³ Id.

⁴ Marsha Shuler, Senate Sends Governor Records Bill to Jindal, *2TheAdvocate.com*, June 24, 2009.

⁵ Governor Jindal Signs Bills Into Law and Announces Bills That Became Law Without Signature, Office of Governor Bobby Jindal, *Press Release*, July 10, 2009.

⁶ Marsha Shuler and Michelle Millhollon, Jindal Law Veils His Office's Records, *The Advocate*, July 11, 2009.

⁷ Marsha Shuler, Public Records Fights, *2TheAdvocate.com*, April 4, 2010.

⁸ Id.

years after their creation.⁹ Gov. Jindal called the open records legislation a distraction and defended the law passed in 2009 as adequate.¹⁰

CHARGE TWO: UNDERCUTTING ETHICS ENFORCEMENT

After a special legislative session passed Gov. Jindal-backed legislation gutting the Louisiana Board of Ethics, ten of its 11 members resigned.¹¹ Seven of the ten members resigned because the legislation transferred ethics enforcement power from the state ethics board to administrative law judges, rendering the board useless.¹² Under the new law, administrative law judges, selected by an appointee of the governor, determine the guilt or innocence of public officials.¹³ Opponents of the legislation contend this will hinder ethics reform and promote political gamesmanship because lawmakers may be able to choose the judges they will face.¹⁴ The new law also requires a tougher standard for evidence to prove ethics violations.¹⁵ Gov. Jindal proposed the legislation while he was under investigation by the Louisiana Board of Ethics.¹⁶ Other proponents of the new law were accused of holding grudges against the ethics board.¹⁷

CHARGE THREE: HYPOCRISY IN REJECTING STIMULUS MONEY

Gov. Jindal declined \$98 million in federal stimulus funds intended to help the state expand unemployment insurance.¹⁸ He also rejected \$9.5 million in stimulus funds to temporarily expand Medicaid to families who left welfare for a job and turned back \$55.3 million to provide health care for people without insurance.¹⁹ Gov. Jindal also refused to apply for \$300 million in stimulus money to potentially fund a high-speed rail line between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, upsetting even some fellow Louisiana Republicans, including Rep. Anh “Joseph” Cao.²⁰

In marked contrast, Gov. Jindal accepted and dispersed one billion in stimulus money to shore up Louisiana’s budget.²¹ The governor also publicly presented a \$521,000 check he signed personally to the First Baptist Church in Anacoco, but failed to disclose its source: the much-maligned federal stimulus law.²²

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Melinda Deslatte, Jindal Suggests Ethics Board Quit Over Disclosure, *The Associated Press*, July 7, 2008.

¹² Id.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ Melinda Deslatte, Jindal Proposes Revamped Ethics Enforcement in Special Session, *The Associated Press*, February 8, 2008.

¹⁵ Deslatte, *The Associated Press*, July 7, 2008.

¹⁶ Deslatte, *The Associated Press*, February 8, 2008.

¹⁷ Id.

¹⁸ Jan Moller, Jindal Rejects \$98 Million in Stimulus Spending, *The Times-Picayune*, February 20, 2009.

¹⁹ Jindal Says ‘No’ to Health Care Stimulus Funds, *The Associated Press and WDSU.com*, March 31, 2009.

²⁰ Doug Simpson, Cao, Jindal at Odds Over Rail ‘Stimulus’ Money, *The Associated Press*, October 2, 2009.

²¹ Jeremy Alford, Bobby and Barack, *Gambit Weekly*, July 27, 2009.

²² Id.

CHARGE FOUR: PATRONAGE FOR DONORS

Gov. Jindal appointed more than 200 campaign contributors—who donated in excess of \$784,000 to the governor’s election campaign in 2007 and 2008—to positions in Louisiana state government.²³ In addition, 12 of the 16 doctors appointed by Gov. Jindal to the Louisiana Medical Advisory Board were found to be campaign donors as well.²⁴

Gov. Jindal has sought to keep such connections from becoming public.²⁵ During the 2009 legislative session, the governor helped kill House Bill 243, a measure which would have required him to disclose the names of campaign contributors appointed to government positions.²⁶ It was not the first time Gov. Jindal tried to keep the legislature from forcing him to divulge his ties to donors; he vetoed similar legislation in 2008.²⁷

Gov. Jindal also has awarded millions of dollars in work and incentives to campaign donors.²⁸ In one egregious case, the state announced plans to invest \$10 million in the Port of Terrebonne, to the benefit of Gary Chouest.²⁹ Mr. Chouest, his business and his closest family members were responsible for at least 18 separate donations to Gov. Jindal’s campaign war-chest, totaling \$85,000.³⁰

CHARGE FIVE: ETHICS VIOLATIONS

Gov. Jindal was fined \$2,500 by the Louisiana Board of Ethics for violating campaign finance laws by failing to disclose in a timely manner more than \$118,000 in direct mail expenses the Louisiana Republican Party made on his behalf.³¹

²³ Jeremy Alford, Jindal’s List, *Gambit Weekly*, March 23, 2009.

²⁴ Id.

²⁵ Shuler, *The Advocate*, April 30, 2009.

²⁶ Id.

²⁷ Id.

²⁸ Jeremy Alford, Deep Pockets, *Gambit Weekly*, April 6, 2009.

²⁹ Id.

³⁰ Id.

³¹ Jan Moller and Ed Anderson, Jindal to Pay Ethics Fine, *The Times-Picayune*, January 25, 2008.