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Blueprint La. releases agenda for new term

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BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A nonpartisan lobbying organization representing a group of Louisiana business leaders is pushing a new package of legislation for the upcoming term that would rework teacher tenure, criminal sentencing laws and retirement programs for government workers.

Blueprint Louisiana outlined its agenda Tuesday and plans to spend about \$100,000 on a marketing campaign including billboards, newspaper ads and online ads to promote the proposals.

Jim Harris, a spokesman for the organization, said the package of recommendations also will be sent to lawmakers, asking them to support the ideas. Blueprint board members are scheduled to meet with the governor's office next week to discuss the agenda, Harris said.

The recommendations are broad in scope and include:

- Collapsing all the state's publicly funded prekindergarten programs into one single system.
- Revamping the job protection system for teachers, known as tenure, to tie the system more to student performance and to do away with tenure for other school employees like bus drivers.
- Changing criminal sentencing laws to lessen prison time for nonviolent and drug offenders.
- Restructuring the public retirement systems for government workers, to move away from a defined pension benefit that workers are guaranteed for life and to consolidate management and governance of some of the systems.
- Shift some of the charity hospitals away from LSU's oversight and into public-private partnerships that could be run with local government assistance and could lead to the shuttering of some LSU inpatient facilities.

The ideas are expected to face opposition, including from teacher unions, state employees and others who would lose job protections or benefits from the proposed changes.

Gov. Bobby Jindal's spokesman, Kyle Plotkin, said the governor's office is reviewing the proposals.

"There are a number of bold ideas in Blueprint's new agenda, and we certainly share their goals to move our education system forward, fix the pension system, improve health care delivery and reduce the incarceration rate. We look forward to working with Blueprint as we put together our legislative agenda for next year's regular session," Plotkin said in a statement.

Online: www.blueprintlouisiana.org

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