

Inaugural Address
Written and Delivered by Lt. Governor Jay Dardenne
January 9, 2012

When the stork picked you up and slung you from his bill toward earth, the chances were one in 20 that you would land in America. The chances were a little more than one-half of one percent that you would land in Louisiana. But those of us assembled today are the lucky ones. We landed in Louisiana. A bountiful land inhabited by the happiest people in America, particularly when the BCS Championship game is played on our turf featuring our undefeated LSU Tigers on the same field where the Ragin' Cajuns claimed their first bowl victory in more than 40 years and where our once maligned but now beloved New Orleans Saints continue on the road to their second Super Bowl championship.

We gather today, as we do every four years, to affirm our faith in this great republic and our confidence in this institution of self-governance that we call democracy.

Those who first inhabited this land, Native Americans, in the northeastern most corner of our state, who developed an advanced society more than 2,000 years B.C., could not have imagined that thousands of years later it would be nominated as a world heritage site, one of only a handful of places on the entire planet to be recognized as a place of special cultural or physical significance.

Robert LaSalle, when he first set foot on this soil in 1641, could not have imagined that the land mass he had been sent to explore would one day be part of the largest real estate transaction in history, a purchase that would bear the name of the land he named in honor of his boss, King Louis XIV.

Some fifty years later two intrepid French Canadian brothers, Iberville and Bienville, could not have imagined that the great river which led them to the site we now know as Jackson Square would become the economic engine of an entire continent.

When he led thousands of French-speaking Catholics out of Nova Scotia following their forcible expulsion in the mid-1700's, Beausoleil Broussard could not have imagined that the new home he helped find for the Acadian people years later would remain true to a lifestyle rooted in a basin and a marshland teeming with natural resources, and celebrated for its flavorful cuisine.

Captain Henry Shreve could not have imagined that breaking a logjam to make the Red River navigable would give rise to a thriving metropolis that would bear his name and foster an industry which would discover beneath our land new fuel

sources, rendering obsolete the very steamboat he used to accomplish his task.

Nor could Buddy Bolden, Jelly Roll Morton or Louis Armstrong have imagined that the rhythmic sound they helped create, having its roots in the Sunday afternoon celebrations at Congo Square, would become a world-renowned musical genre uniquely identified with the city and state they called home.

But we, today, who stand on the shoulders of these and other forebearers, CAN imagine the greatness we hope, expect and demand for our state. It is this imagination that we must convert to reality... facing, evaluating and overcoming the challenges that stand in our way and all-too-often have prevented us from taking full advantage of the human and natural resources which set us apart from every other state in the Union.

It is this rich human gumbo that nourishes our state...the mix of cultures and faiths and accents that define our various regions but unite us as a people...the intersection of religious zeal and joie de vivre that makes Louisiana unique.

For 200 years, we have depended on the resources with which God has blessed us:

- Fertile fields on which to grow cotton and sugar cane
- Acres of timberland to harvest and reforest
- Oil and gas to power a nation, and
- Mighty waterways that link our vital ports with the world.

These very waters, upon which we rely for sustenance, recreation and commerce often threaten us. But, repeatedly, we have stood resiliently in the face of Mother Nature's wrath.

Our Bicentennial celebration began just a few weeks ago at The Kent House in Alexandria. As it continues throughout this

year and we celebrate the traditions, the events, the people and places that have made us who we are today, let us also harness the legacy of adventure, entrepreneurship and creativity that have made us great.

It becomes our obligation to secure the destiny of those unknown and yet unborn, to build on the industries that have strengthened us in the past and to cultivate those which hold promise for the future:

- Sharing our many passions, for food, music, recreation, festivals, and yes, football
- Saving America's wetland
- Maintaining our new title as the "Hollywood of the South" and
- Recognizing that all we love and sometimes take for granted is precisely what makes us so attractive to those who visit here, who explore our treasure trove of

attractions, who marvel at our penchant for preservation, as evidenced by this magnificent Old State Capitol, and who hopefully one day will relocate here and retire, Louisiana style.

Let us resolve today to surge into the next 200 years, confident and resolute that the history, culture and pride we see in the rear view mirror provides a roadmap to imagine the greatness we hope, expect and demand for this wonderful place we call home. Go Tigers and may God continue to bless the great state of Louisiana.