



## ***Gubernatorial candidates listen to citizens' voices, pledge to work with Together Louisiana***

***Together LA: "Elections are not just a contestation between individuals. They are an opportunity for we, the people, to improve the social contract."***

Baton Rouge -- You can't always tell in the moment what will end up being important in the long run of events. But for those who attended the Together Louisiana Statewide Assembly on Friday, November 13th, the gathering had the feeling about it of history-in-the-making.

There was the diversity of attendance -- more than 400 people, heavily clergy, across racial, denominational and economic lines, coming together from 38 different cities across the length and breadth of Louisiana.

There was the engagement of the candidates -- the only event, the group was told, other than debates, where both candidates appeared jointly -- and the commitment of those candidates (in writing, and big enough for all to see) to meet regularly to address the issues raised.

There were the stories from citizens about what's happening in our state, including cuts to higher education, backlogs in infrastructure investment, the need for access to healthcare, the realities of working a low-wage job, the struggles facing K-12 classrooms and more, shared by people directly affected by those realities.

**And then there was the central "argument" of the Assembly -- that "elections are not just a contestation between two individuals," even though they often are reduced to that by the media, the campaigns and others.**

**"Elections are also an opportunity for we, the people, to improve the social contract -- to say that there are some things we need to see happen over the next term of office, and other things that we can no longer tolerate."**

Citizens seemed to seize that opportunity on Friday. And for about an hour, the dog-eat-dog, personalized attack-politics that are, as we are well aware, a dimension of our political process gave way to another possibility for our democracy -- a respectful sharing of ideas and visions, including both citizens and candidates, from which clear differences in priorities and philosophy emerged among the candidates, which can be assessed by the citizenry on their merits.

Will that shift in political culture last longer than a single afternoon? That certainly was the hope of the Statewide Assembly. But whether that hope is realized will be up to all of us.

Click here to view the [event agenda](#). Click here to see the [powerpoint presentation shared at the event with background on the issues](#).

Links to press from across the state are below. (Check out the WWL and Nola.com pieces, in particular, which do the best job of capturing the core theme of the assembly.)

**[Press on Together Louisiana Statewide Assembly](#)**



### [Gubernatorial candidates confronted with voter struggles in forum](#)

WWL-Nov 13, 2015

Friday, the race for governor turned from a toe-to-toe between the candidates to a raw face-to-face with voters. A successful effort at making the governor's race less about the candidates, and more about the people they want to serve.

### [Gubernatorial candidates pledge inclusion at Together Louisiana forum](#)

NOLA.com-Nov 13, 2015

At a forum held by Together Louisiana, a group of church leaders from throughout Louisiana, speakers said they've felt left out of Gov.

Bobby Jindal's administration over the past eight years. So they asked both men to sign a pledge written on huge boards supported by easels where they promised to meet with Together Louisiana leaders twice a year. Both candidates signed.

### [David Vitter takes aim at John Bel Edwards over debate schedule](#)

The Advocate-Nov 13, 2015

During Friday's Together Louisiana forum, the candidates were encouraged not to acknowledge each other and focus solely on their personal positions on issues such as poverty and Medicaid expansion.

### [Gubernatorial candidates debate education, healthcare at forum](#)

KSLA-TV-Nov 13, 2015

The candidates for Louisiana governor met Friday at a forum put on by the organization Together Louisiana. From the poverty rate to academics, the organization, composed of community and religious leaders from across the state, told candidates they are tired of Louisiana always falling behind.

"Governor Edwards, Governor Vitter, we can do better," said another

### [Edwards, Viitter make pledge to Together LA](#)

WVLA-33-Nov 13, 2015

The Together LA forum was billed to be an "intervention" to the personal attacks coming from both candidates, and the organization even asked them to refrain from commenting on their opponent. Organizers sought to bring the governor's race back to what they called real issues facing real people.

### [Vitter More Visible; Talks Faith, Freedom](#)

WRKF-Nov 16, 2015

### [Vitter talks of his conditions for Medicaid expansion in La.](#)

Associated Press / Washington Times-Nov 13, 2015

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