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By Marsha Shuler

CABL head criticizes disclosure law effect

A law approved in Gov. Bobby Jindal's special ethics session requires too much financial disclosure by largely volunteer, unpaid members of state boards, two business- and civic-oriented groups said Monday.

The Council for A Better Louisiana and LA Ethics 1 — which pushed the Jindal ethics agenda — came out for state Sen. Danny Martiny's effort to reduce the information required from those serving on the boards.

CABL president Barry Erwin told the Press Club of Baton Rouge that the original Senate Bill 718 by Martiny, R-Kenner, strikes "a decent, good balance" of disclosure for board members who now must divulge the same level of detailed information as state legislators.

The current law will result in resignations by the droves from state boards and commissions, Erwin said. Some boards, such as the Board of Commissioners of City Park in New Orleans, are preparing to change bylaw requirements for what constitutes a quorum out of fear they will not be able to operate, he said.

LA Ethics 1 said Martiny's bill "will establish an equitable disclosure process for boards and commissions, many of which are comprised of volunteers and receive little or no compensation," according to a news release issued by LA Ethics 1.

Today, members of state boards and commissions — ranging from higher education panels to the tax commission to human service districts and museum boards — have to disclose their income, assets, liabilities, property ownership, investments and the like.

Martiny's bill would require disclosure by board members and their spouses of employment, business positions, business income sources, association with nonprofits, and income from government and/or business dealings with gambling interests.

The members would also sign affidavits that they knew of no conflicts of interest.

The full Senate altered SB718. Martiny is hoping to scrap that approach and get back to his original bill when it comes up for a scheduled House committee hearing this week.