



Nicholls State University

Office of the President

P.O. Box 2001 | Thibodaux, LA 70310 | 985.448.4003 | 985.448.4920 [F]

February 14, 2023 **Via Electronic Transmittal Only** (Kathy_Stuart@Cassidy.Senate.Gov)

U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Sen. Bill Cassidy:

Nicholls State University was 50 miles away from the Gulf of Mexico when the university first opened its doors in 1948. Today, we are 24 miles away. I want to commend you for spearheading this effort to increase funding for coastal restoration and conservation.

It is not overstating the matter to say that the Coastal Louisiana community is fighting for their livelihood. Louisiana loses a football field of coastal islands and wetlands every 100 minutes and has experienced more coastal land loss than any other state in the nation since 1930, with over 1,800 square miles turned to open water. The Terrebonne Basin alone has lost over 30,000 acres of wetlands since 1932, the highest rate of coastal land loss in Louisiana.

As a university that represents eight coastal parishes, it is imperative that we get involved. We have partnered with the CPRA to build the Coastal Center to conduct and distribute coastal research throughout the state. Thanks to a grant from BOEM, we are developing a federal coastal research database that will allow scientists from all over to share and access information that can help save our coast. Our Bayou Region Incubator will foster entrepreneurship to help enact coastal projects and rebuild our coastal economy. We are facing one of the most important environmental challenges in the country today, but Colonels never retreat.

We are thankful for the funds received from GOMESA, but I fear they are not enough. The Reinvesting in Shoreline Economies & Ecosystems (RISEE) Act of 2023 is crucial for Coastal Louisiana. By eliminating the GOMESA cap and protecting it from sequestration, this would ensure a steady stream of federal dollars to aid our efforts to restore and protect our coast. This money funds the state's Coastal Master Plan, the most ambitious effort to curb coastal erosion. Additionally, the 37.5 percent of offshore wind revenues would help to protect our natural resources that help give Louisiana much of its unique identity.

I understand Congress has many legislative priorities, but I would encourage the body to recognize the gravity of this legislation. Nicholls, the Bayou Region and the state of Louisiana will continue to fight for our coast, but we will be severely handicapped without significant federal help.

On behalf of the Nicholls campus, thank you for your leadership, and keep fighting the good fight.

Sincerely,

Jay Clune, PhD
President
Nicholls State University