Happy Tuesday, Trackers...

I went from catching fish on Belle River this past weekend (PHOTO EVIDENCE: http://bit.ly/1ZMvy9O) to watching the Louisiana Legislature catch hell on Monday.

Not one to beat around the bush, **Rev and Fisc Chair J.P. Morrell** announced publicly yesterday that he was holding the sales tax fix legislation hostage until the House sent over more tax boosters. **Speaker Taylor Barras** heard about it from reporters and said he had no idea it was going to happen. “That’s disappointing,” Barras added, “Good God.”

Stuck in the middle of this Louisiana standoff are the Girl Scouts, who are waiting to get their sales tax break back. It’s Morrell versus the Girl Scouts, although it’s really Morrell versus the entire lower chamber. How could this possibly go sideways?

Later in the afternoon the House got started two hours late, but it was in the name of compromise. Hallway negotiations lit a fire underneath the itemized deduction push that previously failed to gain traction — way back last week. Those who talked it out were **Rep. Malinda Brumfield White**, sponsor of the bill; **Ways & Means Chair Neil Abramson**, whose committee will hear the bill tomorrow; **Dem Caucus Chair Gene Reynolds**, the tip of the
administrative spear on the House floor; Robert Adley, representing the 4th Floor; and others.

A proposed sunset date of 2018 and a revenue trigger should make it more palatable for at least one Republican to flip their vote on the committee. If Abramson stays out of it and doesn’t vote, that’ll send itemized deductions to the House floor, where it will need 53 votes. That’s a workable number and represents what could be a much-needed win for Gov. John Bel Edwards.

Meanwhile the action has gone from hot to non-existent to rapid-fire to centralized. The only politistuff happening today can be found in the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Committee, which has a Tuesday agenda that’s one part actionable, another part actionable-but-not-today and another part that’s not actionable at all.

The full Senate took a very long break last week, both chambers had a three-day weekend and the House will not convene today. But don’t nap on tomorrow; there are big tax votes on the House floor.

LaHISTORY: WHO EARL LONG MET AT THE SHO-BAR

Tomorrow marks the first anniversary of the death of Blaze Starr, famed burlesque dancer and one-time squeeze to late Gov. Earl K. Long.

People magazine (READ: http://bit.ly/1QcbQU) in a 1989 story explained how they met. Long, as his last year as governor was winding down, went to New Orleans to catch an act or two at the Sho-Bar. What he saw was Starr’s “Burning Couch” routine. Here’s how it happened:

“As I headed onstage for the finale, I could hear him hollering, ‘Will you go to dinner with me?’”

“Can I trust you?” I said.

“Hell, no,” he replied.
Starr talked about learning of Long’s 1960 passing on the radio. She didn’t even know he was in the hospital.

“While his body lay in state at the Capitol, I walked right up and put a rose on his casket with my head high and walked out.”

Of course, some folks don’t like the eternal, historical connection between Starr and Long. In his 1991 memoir, “Peapatch Politics: The Earl Long Era in Louisiana Politics,” Long’s lieutenant governor Bill Dodd suggested it should be forgettable.

“On a scale of nothing to something, I would rate Blaze a perfect zero.”

Alright, Trackers. Let’s get on with it...

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UNCOMFORTABLE CHOICES AWAIT LEGISLATURE, GOVERNOR

So now what? The Edwards Administration is preparing to immediately implement funding reductions and trigger closures around the state on July 1 if lawmakers fail to raise enough tax revenue to adequately cover a $600 million budget shortfall. The governor is basically warning all of us that a mini-shutdown is coming and that members of the Legislature are the only ones who can play hero.

Yet in the most predictable reaction of the entire legislative year, conservatives in the House have barely blinked in this game of high-stakes chicken. Before the first week of the second special session had even concluded, Republican representatives appeared content with approving less than half of that $600 million sum.

*There’s still time remaining for some compromises, but it already feels like a repeat of the first special session from a few months ago,*
when conservatives largely ignored Gov. John Bel Edwards’ initial call for new revenue.

The second special session must adjourn by midnight next Thursday, June 23. How spooky is that? Granted, there are several lawmakers who have been inside the Capitol building at the witching hour, due to marathon committee meetings or late office hours. But it has been a mighty long time since all 144 members of the Legislature were scheduled to be there together at midnight for official business.

*It will indeed be dark. With no sun shining in, fewer bodies moving about than usual and the noise level lowered, members of the Legislature and the administration will have to come to grips with what has transpired over the past five and a half months.* Will anyone feel a sense of pride? Will anyone be ashamed? Will anyone be able to offer a logical and clear path forward to get Louisiana out of this swamp of budget, revenue and tax problems?

Maybe the House and Senate will decide to end the second special session early. But, truly, it doesn’t matter as much as you might think. Edwards is unlikely to get the full $600 million out of lawmakers to close all of the budget gaps. And he refuses to front-load the next fiscal year, starting July 1, in a way that allows for no immediate funding reductions. Instead, the governor is evenly dividing the available revenue over 12 months, so that the cuts will be felt right away. By comparison, the Jindal Administration was a proponent of the front-loading method, which resulted in a string of mid-year budget cuts.

On financial issues, the Legislature is at a stalemate. Lawmakers could perpetuate it by sticking to classic conservative-liberal lines or they could simply try again. The governor, for example, could call the Legislature back into a third special session, possibly in the fall so that the closures and cuts can have an chance to sink in.

If that doesn’t work out, there could be another opportunity for lawmakers to both alleviate their stalemate and give Edwards his elusive “down payment on tax reform.” A task force, charged with making budget and tax recommendations,
will have a report ready in the fall that lawmakers can put into action during the 2017 regular session next spring.

Still, without gavels moving into new hands in the House, or a major shift in strategy somewhere inside the Capitol, there should be no expectations of different results. The House reached the end of the first special session in the same manner it’s approaching the conclusion of the second special session. It also failed to pass a massive construction budget in the regular session that adjourned last week.

The governor and Legislature may need to warm to the idea of a constitutional convention to make structural changes to the tax code and budget. It would break the stalemate by taking lawmakers out of the policymaking process and voters would get final approval over any changes proposed. There’s already a task force — yes, another one — being put together that will study the issue and make recommendations on how to move forward.

What tax changes have been embraced by representatives and senators over the past two years have only been temporary. Soon enough, unless the economy picks up, lawmakers will be in the exact same situation they were in five months ago. The budget will continue to have shortfalls and, as a result, new revenue and more funding reductions will be required.

For all of the strange and politically uncomfortable and regretful things that have come to pass this legislative year so far — all of which foreshadows a volatile term to come — it’s still difficult to accept that tougher times are ahead. But those trying times are indeed coming, probably sooner than later.

To read Jeremy Alford’s latest weekly syndicated column in its entirety, click here: http://bit.ly/28zmDOZ

A message sponsored by The Picard Group:

OCTOBER 9 IN LAFAYETTE: Franco-Fête 2016
Save the Date for CODOFIL’s annual Franco-Fête French-themed fundraiser to be held on October 9, 2016. The event will benefit CODOFIL’s Escadrille Louisiane Scholarship Program.

Dr. William Arceneaux, CODOFIL president, will honor Mrs. Lois and former U.S. Senator John Breaux, two outstanding Louisiana citizens who have promoted and enriched the French culture in Louisiana. Past honorees include the late renowned Louisiana artist George Rodrigue, longtime Acadiana news anchor Marie Placer and former Lafayette Parish Mayor Joey Durel.

The Picard Group is proud to sponsor this significant event and Tyron Picard, Principal of The Picard Group, is honored to serve on the CODOFIL board. For more information on the event please contact RSVP@thepicardgroup.com.

WARDS DROPS INVENTORY-INDUSTRIAL TAX HYBRID

Last-minute bills have a way of either tanking right out of the gate or catching a surprise wave of acceptance... One to watch for is a bill, just dropped yesterday, from Sen. Rick Ward that would force businesses to choose between the inventory tax credit and industrial tax exemption.

Currently the legislative intent to have the bill, if passed, immediately apply to businesses that have both tax breaks. “I think it could be a significant cost-savings measure,” said Ward, who had not yet obtained a fiscal note as of Monday evening.

Ward started working on the concept in the first special session, but said it only recently came together in a way that was presentable.

CAMPAIGNS TARGET LAWMAKERS

— The Louisiana Manufacturers Political Action Committee has purchased more than 3,000 radio spots over the next two weeks that urge voters to contact lawmakers and Gov. John Bel Edwards to ask them to oppose tax increases.
— Americans for Prosperity’s Louisiana chapter dropped mail pieces last week in the House districts of six Republicans who have been friendly to Edwards’ revenue-raising agenda.

— The pro-school choice group the Louisiana Federation For Children put $200,000 into a highly-publicized media buy in April. During the second special session AFC’s Louisiana chapter is also targeting specific lawmakers with direct mail and digital ads.

— The pro-Edwards Rebuild Louisiana is still on television statewide with a Medicaid expansion spot, but has transitioned into messaging full-time for the second special session. Mail is being dropped, robocalls are out there and a digital buy started last week. The group is actively raising money to target more than a dozen legislative seats.

— GOP donor and influencer Lane Grigsby is meeting privately with lawmakers and has sponsored a statewide poll.

— The Louisiana Republican Party is distributing the House and Senate switchboard phone numbers to its grassroots lists.

— The Louisiana Association of Educators, one of the state’s two teachers unions, is spending $60,000 on an outreach campaign right now to convince lawmakers to raise taxes to help fund education needs.

— Predicting a last-minute debate over hospital funding, the Louisiana Hospital Association launched a television, radio and social media ad campaign on May 23 and the spots stayed on the air until June 5, the day before the second special session convened.

— In what amounts to a public information campaign, Invest in a Healthy Louisiana is promoting the idea of a higher cigarette tax for a future session.

— From the woman who gave us blaze pink as an alternative to hunter orange emerges a breaking bid for rookie of the year. **Rep. Malinda Brumfield White** not only passed a bill in the first special session (Act 15/vendors compensation) as a true freshman, but she also had another four bills signed into law by the governor in the regular session, basically all in the policy realm of public safety. Now in the second special session she’s positioned to have THE itemized deductions bill that could give **Gov. John Bel Edwards** his first June win and could potentially move the revenue needle. But she has a long way to go for the legislative hat trick.

— Because he’s The Man. That’s why... **Jay Shelledy** has been named “Educator of the Year” by the News and Online Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Shelledy’s reporting and team-leading on cold civil-rights murders is the stuff of legend and his management of the Manship School’s statehouse program has been inspiring. Go and introduce yourself on the Capitol’s Press Row if you have not yet met him.

— Electing **John Bel Edwards** was the first step. “When I get elected to the United State Senate, that’s the next step,” **Foster Campbell** says in a new web video for his U.S. Senate bid. The other big promise: Campbell said he will pass a law that prohibits members of Congress from working for a lobbying firm. WATCH: [http://bit.ly/1Ps7JOV](http://bit.ly/1Ps7JOV)

— Edwards hosting yet another fundraiser for Campbell... next Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. at the Downtown Hilton in Baton Rouge. Then again Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in Shreveport...

— Staying on theme here... You may remember last week the pro-JBE Rebuild Louisiana had a poll (SEE: [http://bit.ly/1TUlGqC](http://bit.ly/1TUlGqC)). What you didn’t see in that release was a question on the U.S. Senate race, inserted and paid for by the pro-Dem group. With leaners, it showed **Kennedy**, 24, and **Campbell**, 14, headed to a runoff, followed by **Boustany** at 11, **Fayard** at 9, **Fleming** at 7, Maness at 3 and undecided at 33. (SENATE QUESTION & NUMBERS: [http://bit.ly/1YpDUpm](http://bit.ly/1YpDUpm))
— **Judge Regina Bartholomew Woods’** campaign for the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal has a fundraiser Thursday at 5:30 p.m. at Dooky Chase’s on Orleans Avenue. INVITE: [http://bit.ly/1UhNZBZ](http://bit.ly/1UhNZBZ)

— The attorney general’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit has been selected to receive the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General’s “Award of Excellence in Fighting Fraud, Waste and Abuse.”

— At 1:30 p.m. the governor will sign into law several bills, including the so-called raise the age measure, the REAL ID bill and another on content standards and related tests.

— Former ambassador **John Bolton**, who served as the United States’ permanent representative to the United Nations, has endorsed **Grover Joseph Rees** for the 3rd Congressional District.

— This week **Congressman John Fleming**, a candidate for the U.S. Senate, earned the endorsement of the National Republican Trust PAC.

— More than 20 state treasurers from across the country will join nearly 600 public finance experts in New Orleans today for a four-day national symposium focused on finance issues facing states across the country.

— Rasmussen Reports: A new national telephone and online survey finds that 76 percent of likely U.S. voters say they personally would be willing to vote for a woman president, although that’s down slightly from 79 percent a year ago and 82 percent in June 2011. Fifteen percent are not willing to vote for a woman for president, while 9 percent are undecided.

— U.S. Senate candidate **Rob Maness** will be announcing his “Contract with Louisiana” this week. DATE AND LOCALES: [http://bit.ly/1UsIXDN](http://bit.ly/1UsIXDN)

— **Smokie Bourgeois**, a business owner and former metro councilman, announced his run for Baton Rouge mayor-president over the weekend.
— Abhay Patel of New Orleans will officially declare his candidacy for the U.S. Senate on Wednesday in Free Speech Alley on the campus of LSU.

— Congressman Ralph Abraham issued the following statement in regards to his vote against the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act: “The long-term path to Puerto Rico’s financial stability must be paved by Puerto Ricans, not Washington. Solvency has to come from within, and that is why I opposed the PROMESA bill.”

— Appointed to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission: Bobby Samanie of Meraux and Al Sunseri of New Orleans.

— The U.S. Term Limits Amendment Pledge: “I pledge that as a member of Congress I will cosponsor and vote for the U.S. Term Limits amendment of three (3) House terms and two (2) Senate terms and no longer limit.” Congressman John Fleming has signed it.

— Former state Rep. Chris Roy has been appointed to the Red River, Atchafalaya and Bayou Boeuf Levee District.

— From the Treasury: “The May 2016 Net Receipts Report shows that total state revenue thus far for 2015-2016 was $6.551 billion, an 8 percent decrease compared to that time last year but a 7 percent increase from December 2015.”

— The Louisiana Press Association’s annual convention will take place June 17-18 at L’Auberge Lake Charles.

— Rick Smith’s campaign for mayor of Covington has an event scheduled tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. at the Southern Hotel. INVITE: http://bit.ly/1URpybE

— James Waskom, director of the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, will address the Press Club of Baton Rouge on Monday. Waskom will discuss the 2016 hurricane season and give updates on the four presidentially declared pre-hurricane season disasters he is already addressing in his first six months in office. Press Club meets at the Belle of Baton Rouge Hotel at 11:30 a.m.
LaPOLITICS WEEKLY REHASH

For Issue 1075 of LaPolitics Weekly on Thursday, June 9, subscribers were informed that Gov. John Bel Edwards was prepared to implement cuts and trigger closures on July 1 if lawmakers don’t send him new revenue. We were also the first to touch upon the possibility of Ways & Means shutting it down, mostly, for the rest of the special session and the challenges House staffers now face in regard to overtime pay.

Here’s the rest of the rundown from last week’s regular issue:

— Supplemental budget is the real fight...
— How incentive money flows back to LED...
— Lawmakers feeling outside influence...
— Dedications transfer not a dead issue...
— Senate leaders raising money in HD 85...
— 3rd District poll...
— Rantz up on TV...
— Campbell vs. Vitter...
— U.S. Senate debates announced...
— Louisiana has money problems...
— Our regular “They Said It” feature... (“I like it when people talk nerdy to me.” — House Education Chair Nancy Landry, after hearing an update on education standards)

You could have learned about the special session call before everyone else! Be among the first wave with Louisiana’s best political scoop. Subscribe now: http://goo.gl/VsSGEZ

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LaPOLITICS WEEKLY PREVIEW

For Issue 1076 of LaPolitics Weekly, to be published on Thursday, subscribers will get the last bit of handicapping to be had for the special session that ends at midnight on June 23. Plus updates on the fall ballot and what comes next for the budget. All of this, and much more!

Get on the inside track: http://goo.gl/VsSGEZ

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THE TUESDAY NEWS SHAPING OUR POLITICS

— James Karst (@jameskarst ): That time a state senator stabbed a newspaper reporter... http://bit.ly/1Q0tcUK

— Lee Zurik (@LeeZurik): Universities find questionable methods to boost athletics spending... http://bit.ly/1Q1nNNe

— E-Crisp (@elizabethcrisp): Via her Twitter machine... “Medicaid expansion enrollment number in Louisiana: 203K after two weeks of sign-up period. Coverage begins July 1.”

— **Greggy Hilburn** (@GregHilburn1): Compromise could revive income tax bill, still 'uphill battle' for passage, member says... [http://tnsne.ws/1tnjJwp](http://tnsne.ws/1tnjJwp)

— Capitol Ace **Melinda Deslatte** (@MelindaDeslatte): “Hoping to flip votes by focusing on the cuts proposed for next year's budget, administration leaders described deep reductions to government services if lawmakers don't drum up $600 million more for the financial year that begins July 1.” [http://apne.ws/1Ub3pe6](http://apne.ws/1Ub3pe6)

— **Mr. T** (@tegbridges): Fixes for Girl Scouts and other exemptions held hostage as legislators angle on taxes... “The House, after some two hours of behind-the-scenes maneuvering, took up only one small tax bill Monday. House Bill 50 would trim a deduction for capital gains taxes. How much the measure would raise is not clear.” [http://bit.ly/1UQJDib](http://bit.ly/1UQJDib)

— In regard to the radio spots from the Louisiana Manufacturers Political Action Committee identifying him by name and opposing his HB 27, **Rep. Chris Broadwater** told Bridges: “Apparently they spent all their time working on radio spots in opposition to the bill instead of drafting an amendment to endure revenue neutrality.”

— **Mark Ballard** (@MarkBallardCnb): “I thought they were talking. It came as a surprise to me that they weren’t,” **Havard** said. “But this is the first year of our independence. We’re learning as we go. Hopefully, we’ve learned something.” [http://bit.ly/1sE4ijl](http://bit.ly/1sE4ijl)


— **Will Sentell** (@WillSentell): The co-chairman of a task force that is supposed to come up with solutions for Louisiana’s road and bridge problems said Monday this one is different from previous studies... “I think first and foremost, this study is being driven by the governor.” [http://bit.ly/1OnbEBA](http://bit.ly/1OnbEBA)
— **Clancy “Big Chief” DuBos (@clancygambit):** House leadership fiddles while Louisiana burns... [http://bit.ly/1RZuI3r](http://bit.ly/1RZuI3r)

— **Gracie (@stephgracela):** Leadership choices shaping session votes... [http://bit.ly/1URB72D](http://bit.ly/1URB72D)


— **Sue Lincoln (@LaCapAxS):** Certain conservative lawmakers had their last hope for a magical pot of budget-saving money dashed Monday... [http://bit.ly/1Ui2qpz](http://bit.ly/1Ui2qpz)

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***CAREER MOVE? POLITICAL APPOINTMENT? Let us know about it at news@LaPolitics.com!***

**BIRTHDAYS**

— Today: Former Congressman **Billy Tauzin, Sen. Regina Barrow**, gov relations pro **Berry Burnside Balfour** and AG legislative director **Callan Joffrion**

— Wednesday 06/15: “The People Introducer” **Marie DesOrmeaux Centanni, Kerry St Pe'** and **Tom Warner**

— Friday 06/17: **Sen. Conrad Appel, Rep. Scott Simon** and ABC’s **Katherine Fremin**

— Saturday 06/18: **Rep. Jimmy Harris**

— Sunday 06/19: **Will “The Thrill” Dubos** and **Travis Cummings**

— Who We Missed: Rep. Phillip DeVillier (June 8)

PITTER PATTER

— Attorney Scott Sternberg and his wife Breland Deano Sternberg welcomed little Louise Margaret to the family on Saturday at 3:24 p.m. In other news, George Sternberg apparently likes being a big brother.

ANNIVERSARIES & WEDDINGS

— Former Rep. Simone Champagne and her husband Gary celebrated their 45th anniversary on Saturday. (As an aside, Simone’s last two unmarried girls both got engaged in May and both will get married in 2017 within one month of each other!)

A message sponsored by The Picard Group:

WHO IS WATCHING YOUR BACK?

Over 1,200 pieces of legislation have been filed thus far in the regular session of the legislature which started March 14 — affecting every sector of business in Louisiana from health care, insurance, gaming, oil and gas, banking, construction, retail and even acupuncture and massage therapy. The team of lobbyists at The Picard Group have spent many hours reviewing and analyzing EVERY SINGLE bill filed, to gauge impacts (both obvious and potential impacts) on our clients.

Congress is now debating many issues before it, affecting everything from seasonal workers vital to Louisiana’s farming and fishing industry to a new Water Resources Development Act that would authorize millions of dollars in projects focused on flood protection, navigation, and water resources.
Who is watching your company’s back in Baton Rouge and Washington, D.C.? A familiar saying around government policy formulation is “if you aren’t at the table, you are probably on the menu!”

If your company needs experienced and bi-partisan governmental representation, let our team of six State and Local Government lobbyists (which collectively have over 100 years of governmental experience), and two D.C. based Federal lobbyists manage your interests.

To learn more, go to www.thepicardgroup.com or call us 337-989-0071.

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