

# Louisiana from 1972 to the Present: The Edwards Era and Beyond

In 1682, King Louis XIV of France officially moved his royal court and the government of France from Paris to his palace complex at Versailles. In the same year, the explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, claimed and named Louisiana for his king. Three hundred and two years later, Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards traveled to France to celebrate his third election to the state's highest office. More than six hundred supporters, fellow politicians, and reporters joined the governor on an eight-day trip, which included a visit to Versailles and a formal dinner in the palace's grand Hall of Mirrors.

Edwards, who was well known for his sense of humor, joked during the dinner that, if he could get the legislature to approve the funds, he would build a palace just like the one at Versailles back home in Louisiana. Although he was not serious, in occupying the Louisiana governor's mansion, Edwards had already come a long way from his upbringing in a sharecropper's cabin in rural Avoyelles Parish.

## Chapter Preview

### People

Edwin Edwards, David Treen, Charles "Buddy" Roemer, David Duke, Mike Foster, Kathleen Blanco, Bobby Jindal, Mary Landrieu

### Places

Johnson, Coteau

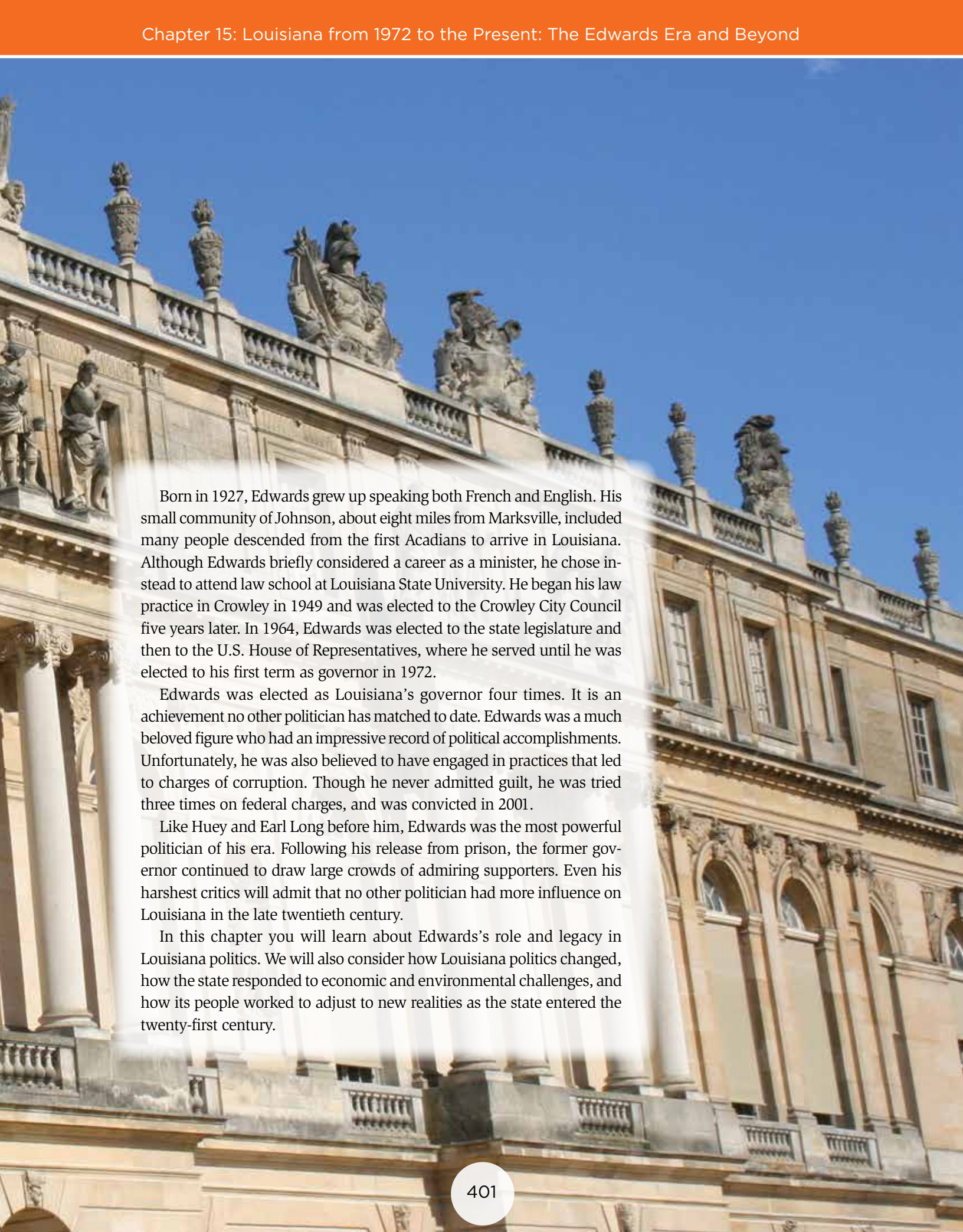
### Terms

capital punishment, mistrial, mandate, white supremacist, Ku Klux Klan, affirmative action, polling, privatize, white flight, incarceration, *laissez les bon temps rouler*



**Right:** Governor Edwin Edwards.

**Background:** The Palace at Versailles, near Paris, France.



Born in 1927, Edwards grew up speaking both French and English. His small community of Johnson, about eight miles from Marksville, included many people descended from the first Acadians to arrive in Louisiana. Although Edwards briefly considered a career as a minister, he chose instead to attend law school at Louisiana State University. He began his law practice in Crowley in 1949 and was elected to the Crowley City Council five years later. In 1964, Edwards was elected to the state legislature and then to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served until he was elected to his first term as governor in 1972.

Edwards was elected as Louisiana's governor four times. It is an achievement no other politician has matched to date. Edwards was a much beloved figure who had an impressive record of political accomplishments. Unfortunately, he was also believed to have engaged in practices that led to charges of corruption. Though he never admitted guilt, he was tried three times on federal charges, and was convicted in 2001.

Like Huey and Earl Long before him, Edwards was the most powerful politician of his era. Following his release from prison, the former governor continued to draw large crowds of admiring supporters. Even his harshest critics will admit that no other politician had more influence on Louisiana in the late twentieth century.

In this chapter you will learn about Edwards's role and legacy in Louisiana politics. We will also consider how Louisiana politics changed, how the state responded to economic and environmental challenges, and how its people worked to adjust to new realities as the state entered the twenty-first century.

# Signs of the Times



## Architecture

The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City were the world's tallest buildings when they were completed in 1972 and 1973. Their destruction in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, shocked the world.

## Entertainment

In 1984, 100 years after the World Cotton Centennial, New Orleans hosted another World's Fair. Called the Louisiana World Exposition, it had a theme of "The World of Rivers—Fresh Waters as a Source of Life." Its prime attraction was a gondola ride that crossed the Mississippi River 200 feet in the air. The fair's mascot was a comical pelican named Seemore D. Fair. Unfortunately, attendance problems caused the exposition to lose money, and it went bankrupt during its six-month run.

## Exploration

NASA's space shuttle program began with the launch of *Columbia* in 1981 and ended with the last flight of *Atlantis* in 2011.

America's exploration of Mars began with the landing of a *Viking* module in 1976. The first two Mars Exploration Rovers, *Spirit* and *Opportunity*, landed on the planet in 2004. A larger, more advanced Rover named *Curiosity* landed on Mars in 2012.

The *Cassini* spacecraft, launched by NASA in 1997, reached Saturn in 2004 and began sending back amazing pictures of the ringed planet and its moons. The *Juno* spacecraft, launched in 2011, will reach Jupiter in 2016.

## Inventions

Personal computers were introduced in the 1970s and soon became essential devices in many households. Cellular telephones, when introduced in the 1970s, were large and bulky.

Today's smaller, sleeker smart phones have many more functions than those early computers and cellular phones combined. The way we read books and other materials changed in 2007 when the first Kindle e-reader was launched.

## Literature

Ernest J. Gaines set most of his stories in Pointe Coupee Parish, where he was born into a sharecropper's family. *A Lesson before Dying* won the 1993 National Book Critics Circle Award. That novel, along with *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and *A Gathering of Old Men*, have been made into TV movies.

Louisianians of all ages were caught up in the Harry Potter novels by British writer J. K. Rowling when they began publication in 1997. The final book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, was published in 2007.

## Military Actions

The Vietnam War, which had involved American troops for many years, ended in 1975. In "Operation Desert Storm" (1991), a U.S.-led coalition defeated Iraqi forces that had invaded the country of Kuwait. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. launched "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan. The U.S. invaded Iraq in "Operation Iraqi Freedom" in 2003.

## Music

In 1996, Jazz at Lincoln Center, co-founded by Wynton Marsalis, was installed as a permanent part of Lincoln Center in New York City, of equal status with the center's classical music and ballet divisions. Wynton, an award-winning jazz and classical trumpeter, was born into a talented New Orleans musical family. Father Ellis is a pianist, and brother Branford is a well-known jazz saxophonist. Brothers Jason and Delfayo are also gifted musicians.

**Timeline**

1970-2020

1970

**1972** - Edwin Edwards began 1st of 2 consecutive terms as governor

**1974** - Constitution of 1974 approved

**1975** - Louisiana Superdome opened in New Orleans

United States celebrated its Bicentennial - **1976**

1980

**1980** - David Treen became 1st Republican governor since Reconstruction

**1984** - Edwin Edwards began 3rd term as governor; celebrated at Versailles

**1986** - Edwards found not guilty of corruption in 2nd trial

**1988** - Charles "Buddy" Roemer became governor



U.S. space shuttle *Challenger* exploded after takeoff - **1986**

1990

**1992** - Edwin Edwards began 4th term as governor  
Land-based casino approved for New Orleans

**1996** - Mike Foster began 1st of 2 terms as governor  
Mary Landrieu won 1st term as U.S. senator

Berlin Wall fell, leading to reunification of Germany - **1989**



Olympic Games held in Atlanta, Georgia - **1996**



2000

**2003** - Bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase

**2004** - Kathleen Blanco became governor

**2005** - Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

September 11 terrorist attacks in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC - **2001**

U.S. space shuttle *Columbia* exploded upon reentry - **2003**

U.S. economy weakened, leading to the "Great Recession" - **2007**

**2008** - Bobby Jindal began 1st of 2 terms as governor

2010

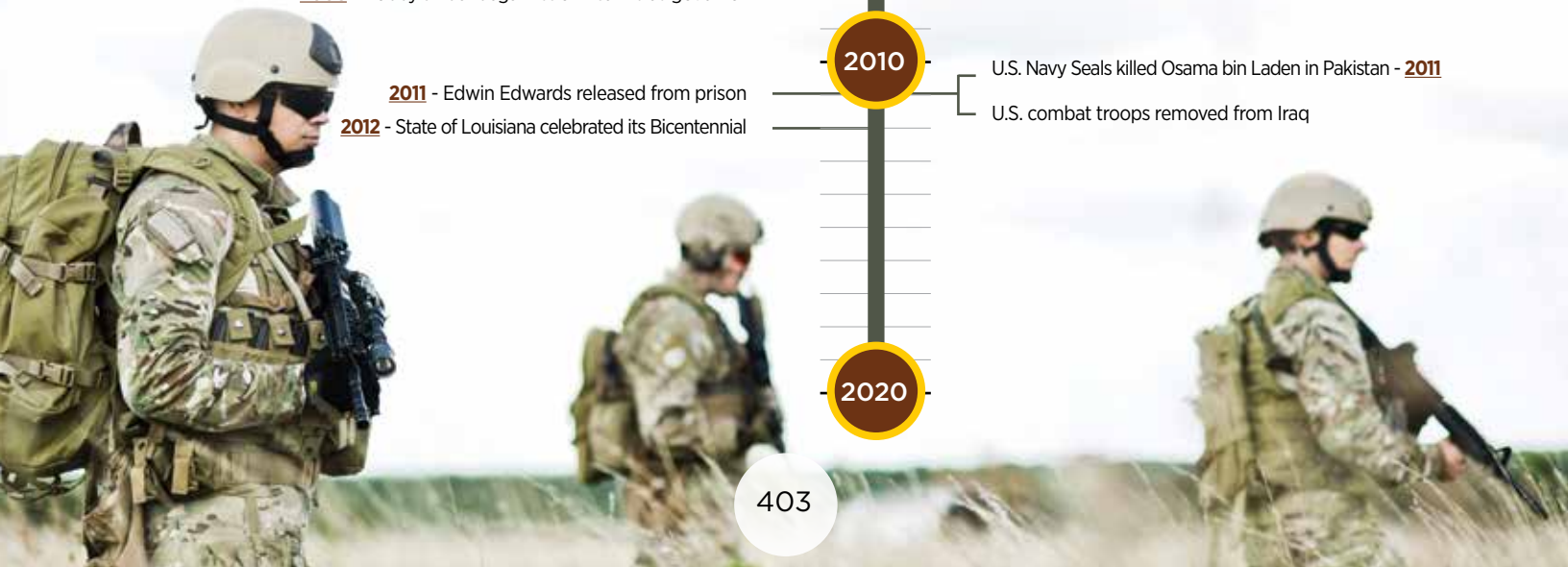
**2011** - Edwin Edwards released from prison

**2012** - State of Louisiana celebrated its Bicentennial

U.S. Navy Seals killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan - **2011**

U.S. combat troops removed from Iraq

2020



## Section 1

# New Voters and Political Change in the Edwards Era

### As you read, look for

- ▶ accomplishments and controversies of Edwin Edwards's four terms as governor;
- ▶ approval of a new state constitution in 1974 and the shrinking of state government;
- ▶ the rise of the Republican Party in Louisiana;
- ▶ terms: **capital punishment, mistrial, mandate, white supremacist, Ku Klux Klan, affirmative action.**

By the time Governor John McKeithen's second term ended, the state had begun a period of political realignment. Edwin Edwards was able to attract many of the state's newly registered African American voters. Combining that with his appeal among Acadian voters, he won his first election to the governor's office with 57 percent of the vote. David Treen, the Republican challenger, lost but did manage to attract more than 40 percent of the votes cast. This suggested that the Republican Party was growing more popular as the state entered the 1970s. Many of these new Republican voters had originally registered as Democrats, and remained so officially—despite their changed voting preferences.

## A New Constitution

Edwin Edwards came into office pledging to reform the way the state did business. One of his highest priorities was to propose a new state constitution. Nearly everyone agreed that the Constitution of 1921 had many problems, not the least of which were the 536 amendments that had been added in its fifty-year history. By the early 1970s, voters had become disgusted by the many complex amendments they were regularly asked to consider. They began to feel that the amendments generally favored narrow special interests rather than the state's people. Many voters began to vote "No" to all the amendments on the ballot. In 1970, for example, voters rejected all fifty-three amendments that were offered for their consideration.

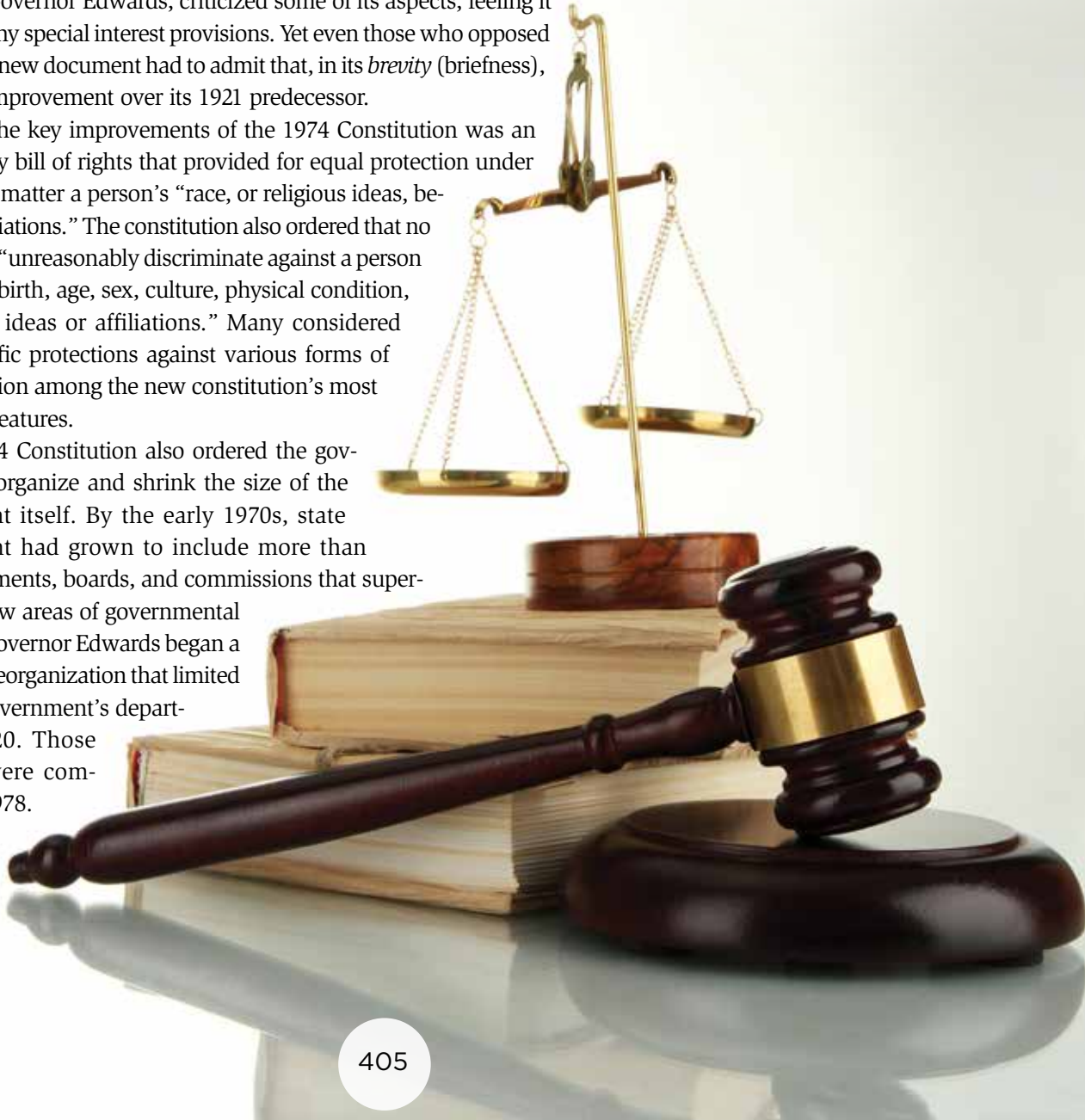
Recognizing the public's desire for reform, Edwards called for a constitutional convention. Its mix of elected and appointed delegates gathered in Baton Rouge for a convention that continued for most of 1973. When the new constitution went to the voters for approval in 1974, it passed by a large margin. Even the strongest supporters of the new constitution, including Governor Edwards, criticized some of its aspects, feeling it had too many special interest provisions. Yet even those who opposed parts of the new document had to admit that, in its *brevity* (briefness), it was an improvement over its 1921 predecessor.

One of the key improvements of the 1974 Constitution was an introductory bill of rights that provided for equal protection under the law, no matter a person's "race, or religious ideas, beliefs, or affiliations." The constitution also ordered that no law should "unreasonably discriminate against a person because of birth, age, sex, culture, physical condition, or political ideas or affiliations." Many considered these specific protections against various forms of discrimination among the new constitution's most important features.

The 1974 Constitution also ordered the governor to reorganize and shrink the size of the government itself. By the early 1970s, state government had grown to include more than 260 departments, boards, and commissions that supervised narrow areas of governmental function. Governor Edwards began a process of reorganization that limited the state government's departments to 20. Those changes were completed in 1978.

### Lagniappe

By the time it was replaced in 1974, the Louisiana Constitution of 1921, with its 536 amendments, had grown to nearly 1,000,000 words. By contrast, the U.S. Constitution, written in 1787, still has fewer than 8,000 words, including its 27 amendments.



## Edwin Edwards as Governor, 1972-1980



Edwin Edwards had other accomplishments besides the new constitution and governmental reorganization. On the economic front, he lowered taxes for individuals and did away with the state property tax entirely. To make up for those revenues, he raised taxes on corporations as well as on oil and gas. He also changed the way the state calculated its severance tax on crude oil. Previously, the severance tax had been calculated on the basis of how much oil was removed from the ground. This was known as *volume-based* taxation.

Edwards gained approval for a 12.5 percent severance tax that was *value-based*. As oil prices rose, so would the amount of severance tax the state was able to collect. In the era when oil prices were already high and rising, this seemed like a good plan. Throughout the 1970s, the state profited greatly from this change.

In fact, Edwards's first two terms were very good periods for the state economically. The popular governor used the abundant funds in the state treasury to expand social programs and improve health care, education, and transportation. With so much money coming into the treasury, Edwards could expand services without raising taxes on individuals. In his first term, the state budget exceeded \$1 billion for the first time. By the time his second term ended in early 1980, the annual budget had grown to \$4 billion.

There is no question that Governor Edwards accomplished significant things for the state. But concerns were also emerging about the governor's personal finances and the way state business had been conducted. There was an allegation that Edwards had allowed his wife to receive a large cash gift from a Korean lobbyist while Edwards was serving in the U.S. House of Representatives. Other critics complained that the governor used his influence to help close friends and associates get state contracts under very favorable terms. At the end of his first two terms, two of his closest political associates were charged with crimes and served time in prison. No formal charges were filed against Edwards. Although the 1974 Constitution prevented him from seeking a third consecutive term, it did not prohibit him from running again in the future.



Although there is no state property tax, individual parishes continue to collect property taxes based on the value of a person's home.

**Above:** Today there are more than four thousand offshore oil rigs off the coast of Louisiana.

## The Open Primary

The 1979 race for governor was the first to be conducted with a newly adopted election procedure called the open primary. In the open primary, Democratic and Republican candidates ran against each other in a single primary. The top-two finishers advanced to the runoff, regardless of party affiliation.

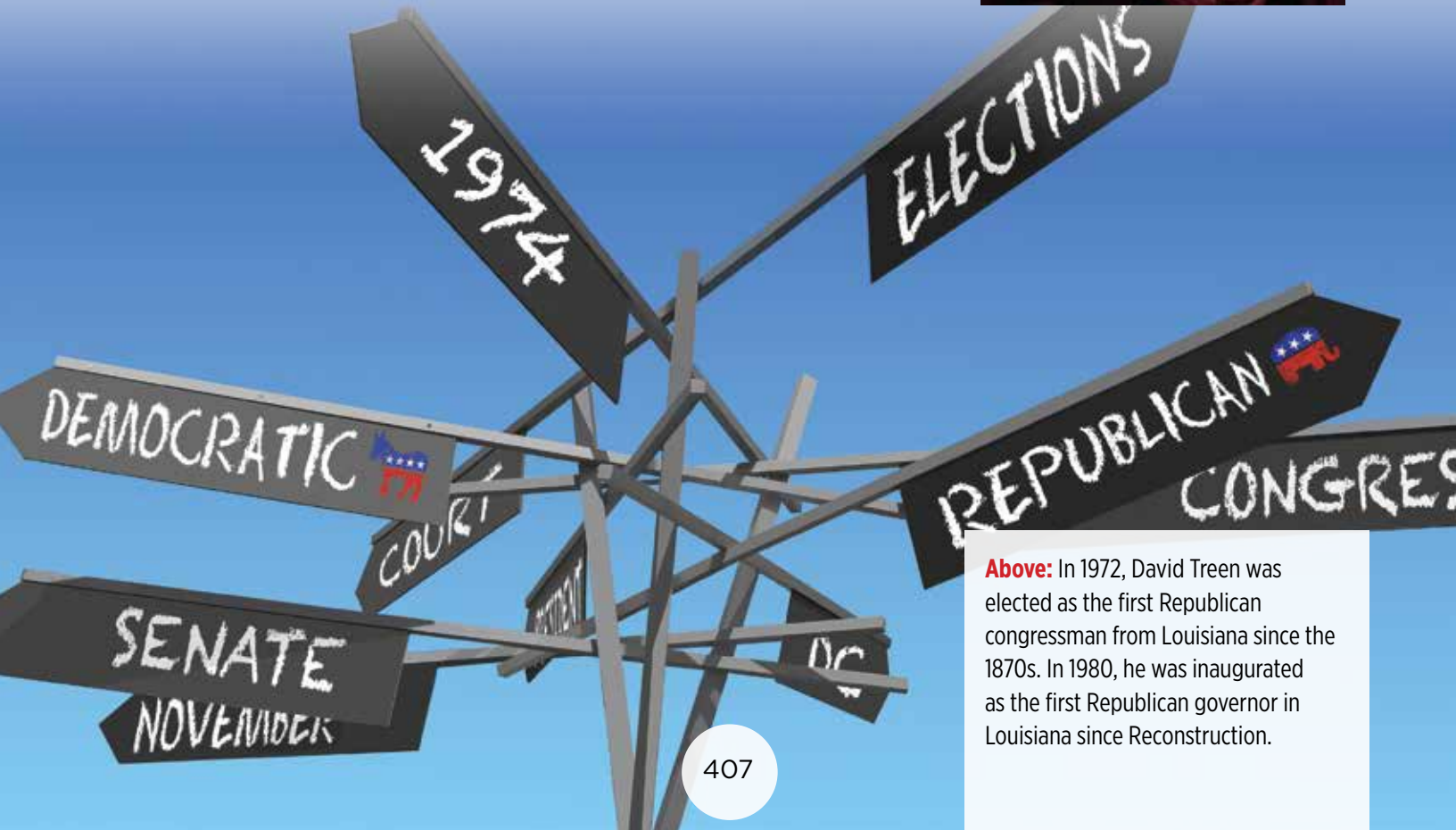
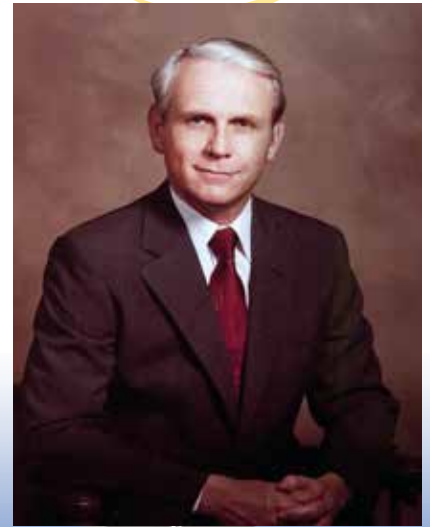
Before this time, Democratic and Republican candidates held separate primaries. Then candidates from each party faced each other in a general election. Because the Democratic Party had been so powerful throughout the twentieth century, the election of Democrats over Republicans in the general elections had been virtually assured.

Democrats thought the open primary would work to their advantage, but they turned out to have it wrong. In the 1979 campaign, a large number of Democratic candidates faced off against a single Republican, U.S. Congressman David Treen. With the Democratic vote divided, Treen made it to the general election, where he faced Democrat Louis Lambert. Four of his previous Democratic opponents endorsed Treen rather than Lambert.

With Democratic support split, Treen won a very narrow victory. He was inaugurated in 1980 as the first Republican governor in Louisiana since Reconstruction. He had accomplished a similar feat in 1972 when he was elected the first Republican congressman from Louisiana since the 1870s. Treen's rise in politics illustrates how the Republican Party's strength had been growing slowly in the state since the mid-1960s. In the 1970s, Republicans appealed to a Louisiana electorate that was growing more conservative.



The open primary is also called a “nonpartisan blanket primary” or a “top two primary.”



**Above:** In 1972, David Treen was elected as the first Republican congressman from Louisiana since the 1870s. In 1980, he was inaugurated as the first Republican governor in Louisiana since Reconstruction.



**Right:** Once reinstated, capital punishment, which is carried out by lethal injection, took place at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. As of 2014, Louisiana is one of thirty-two states that allow capital punishment.



### David Treen as Governor, 1980-1984

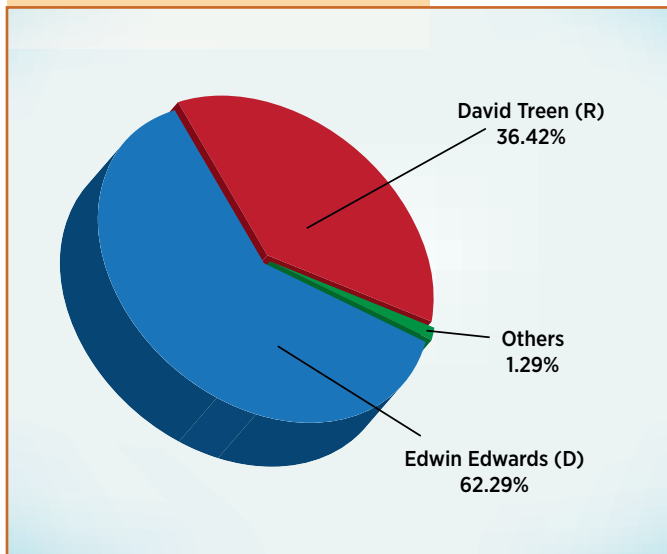
Governor Treen brought a more conservative approach to certain areas of state government. That included reinstating **capital punishment** (the legally authorized killing of someone as punishment for a crime). But he angered some supporters by continuing the high levels of spending, borrowing, and social service provision more commonly associated with Democrats. State budgets continued to rise. The state also continued to borrow large amounts of money to construct new state facilities and infrastructure.

Treen had hoped to accomplish a great many things as governor. In particular, he wanted to enact a tax on the transportation of oil and gas through the state’s pipelines. The proceeds from that tax would be devoted to restoring the state’s shrinking marsh and threatened coastal areas. He called the proposal the Coastal Wetlands Environmental Levy (CWEL). However, Treen was unable to get legislative approval for the plan.

### Figure 15.1

#### Louisiana Governor’s Race - 1983

Why was no runoff required after this open primary election?



### The Return of Edwin Edwards

In 1983, Edwin Edwards ran against Treen and won a decisive but expensive victory over his opponent. After the election in late October 1983, Edwards’s campaign owed more than \$4 million and did not have the money on hand to repay the debt. The extravagant trip to France in early 1984, with which this chapter began, was designed not only as a celebration but also to pay off the campaign debts. With many of the six hundred travelers paying \$10,000 each to accompany Edwards, his campaign was able to make enough after expenses to pay off all his campaign debts. It was an example of the *bon temps* (“good times”) philosophy with which Edwards and the state had become so closely associated.



### Edwin Edwards as Governor, 1984-1988

Edwin Edwards entered his third term promising to repeat the successes and prosperity of his first two terms. However, by early 1984, oil prices had already seen a drastic decline. Those prices continued to fall over the next few years. Even though they rebounded slightly by the late 1980s, the state found itself in an economic crisis.

Governor Edwards had to seek new ways to balance the state budget. He even raised taxes on individuals. He also had to shrink the size of state government, which led to massive layoffs of state employees. Those layoffs, combined with the many private sector jobs that were lost due to the oil crisis, created a severe economic downturn. Louisiana had higher levels of unemployment than any other state during Edwards's third term. Many people left the state for good in these years, seeking better opportunities elsewhere.

During this time, federal charges were brought against Edwards and several of his associates. The sitting governor was charged with using his influence to award state contracts to his friends and to enrich himself in the process. Edwards sat through two trials in 1985 and 1986. The first one ended in a **mistrial** (a trial that is not valid because of an error or because the jury cannot decide a verdict). In the second trial, he was found not guilty. Despite the verdict, his image was badly damaged and he lost popular support. If Louisianians had been willing to tolerate corruption in good economic times, they were, apparently, less willing to do so when economic times were hard.

### The Roemer Revolution

Charles "Buddy" Roemer was born in Bossier City in 1943. His father, Charles Roemer Sr., had served as commissioner of administration under Edwards and was one of the officials who had gone to prison after Edwards's first two terms. Roemer portrayed himself as a reformer who would "slay the dragon" of corruption that Edwards represented. In the open primary in late 1987, Roemer scored a surprising victory over Edwards, who came in second. Roemer finished with 33 percent of the vote, compared to the 27 percent won by Edwards.

### Lagniappe

In 1986, one of Louisiana's most famous names disappeared from the U.S. Senate when Russell Long, a U.S. senator from Louisiana since 1949, retired. He was the only person who was ever preceded in the U.S. Senate by *both* his parents—Huey Long and Rose Long.



**Above:** Buddy Roemer won the governor's election as a Democrat in 1987. He ran for a second term as a Republican in 1991 but came in third in the open primary.

## Lagniappe

To get around the provision in the 1974 Constitution that required the legislature to define and suppress gambling, these new forms of gambling were referred to as “gaming” instead.

If things had gone as they normally would, Roemer and Edwards would have entered the general election against each other. However, the day following the primary, Edwards *conceded* (gave up, forfeited the race) to Roemer and declined to challenge him in the general election. Roemer became governor without a general election victory, but he entered office facing several serious problems. Solving them would require support from both the legislature and the voters. Because there was no general election, Roemer did not have the opportunity to gain a majority of the vote. As a result, he could never claim to have entered the governor’s office with a firm mandate from the state’s people for the many changes he wanted to make. A **mandate** is authorization or approval given to an elected official by the voters.

As he entered office in early 1988, Roemer wanted to lower taxes on businesses and raise them on individuals. He and others believed that this change would encourage businesses to come to Louisiana and provide better jobs. The governor got a package of taxation reforms through the legislature, but the state’s voters overwhelmingly rejected them.

When his taxation reforms failed, Roemer had to try a different approach. Ultimately, he was persuaded to support the return of legalized gambling to Louisiana. During his single term as governor, Louisiana regained a state lottery and also legalized video poker and gambling on riverboats.

Although his first term could hardly have been considered a success, Roemer ran for a second term in 1991. He even changed from the Democratic to the Republican Party, hoping the growing numbers of voters with Republican views would support him. Despite his party change, when the primary took place in October of 1991, Roemer came in third place. He finished behind Edwin Edwards and a former state legislator named David Duke.



**Right:** Riverboat gambling venues were designed to resemble the ornate riverboats of the nineteenth century. This boat operated for many years as the Crown Casino in Westlake (a suburb of Lake Charles). In 2012, it was sold and moved to Bossier City.





## The 1991 Election

The two men who faced each other in the 1991 runoff were both controversial. Although Edwards had never been convicted of a crime, most people accepted that there was some corruption surrounding the governor. Edwards himself added fuel to such charges when he made statements insisting that there was “a big difference between what’s illegal and what causes you people to raise your eyebrows.”

David Duke also had issues to confront. Born in 1950, Duke had been a vocal white supremacist since his mid-teens. A **white supremacist** is a person who believes that the white race is better than all other races and should control all other races. While attending Louisiana State University, he also adopted prejudicial views against other non-white people he referred to as “mongrel races” and against Jews. Duke believed whites had been the losers in the civil rights movement. In the 1970s, he became a national leader in the Knights of the **Ku Klux Klan** (a secret white supremacist organization). In the early 1980s, he founded an organization called the National Association for the Advancement of White People.

Duke ran for state office several times in the 1980s, first as a Democrat and later as a Republican. He finally won election to the state House of Representatives in 1989. The next year he ran for the U.S. Senate from Louisiana. Although he lost, he won 43.5 percent of the vote. Based on those encouraging results, Duke decided to enter the governor’s race in 1991.

In the October primary, Duke came in a close second to Edwin Edwards. The month between the October primary and the November general election was an unforgettable one in state politics. People from all over the country were interested in the race. In the end, however, the state’s voters would decide the outcome. After the primary, citizens who were not registered to vote flooded Registrar of Voters Offices to get on the voting rolls in time to take part in the general election. Alarmed that Duke might actually become governor, more than 68,000 people registered in the days immediately following the primary. More than half of them were African American.



The Ku Klux Klan was first founded after the Civil War. The Klan gained renewed popularity in response to the civil rights movement.

**Above:** A Ku Klux Klan gathering from the 1920s.



Some voters felt that Duke was still *propagating* (making known to many people) racist beliefs. They refused to vote for him on that basis. Others believed Duke when he said that he had let go of his white supremacist past and had come to embrace more mainstream Republican ideas like welfare reform and opposition to affirmative action. **Affirmative action** is the practice of improving the educational and job opportunities for members of groups that have been discriminated against in the past.

Yet even some Republicans worried that the election of a former Ku Klux Klan leader to the state's highest office would ruin the state's reputation. Former governor David Treen reflected this sentiment when he endorsed Edwards over Duke. Many businesspeople also supported Edwards, fearing they would not be able to attract workers to the state if Duke were elected.

On November 16, 1991, voters went to the polls in large numbers. Almost 79 percent of those registered actually voted. This was a very high figure since, even in presidential elections, typically only about half of all voters participated. Edwards scored a decisive victory over Duke, winning 61 percent of the vote as compared to Duke's 39 percent. In the process, he had won an *unprecedented* (never done before) fourth term as Louisiana's governor.

### Governor Edwards's Fourth Term

In his final term as governor, Edwards faced the lingering economic problems brought on by the oil crisis of the late 1980s. However, the state's widespread poverty also meant that the federal health care program for the poor, called Medicaid, gave the state a larger share of benefits because its population of poor people was so high. This was called a "disproportionate share" of Medicaid funds. Unfortunately, instead of benefiting many of the people these funds were supposed to help, much of this money went to businesses and providers of very specialized health services. Many politically connected individuals received these funds and took large fees for their services. Many businesspeople who were close to the governor made fortunes from their health-care-related businesses.

**Above:** David Duke, who had once been a national leader in the Ku Klux Klan, came in second to Edwin Edwards in the open primary of 1991. In the general election, which had extremely high voter turnout, Edwards defeated him by a wide margin. Some voters were concerned about Duke's racist beliefs and others worried about the state's reputation if a former klansman was elected governor.



Gambling also presented opportunities for corrupt activity. Gaming in the form of land-based casinos became legal during Edwards's final term. Edwards pushed hard and won approval in 1992 for the construction of a land-based casino to be built in New Orleans. In the years that followed, federal investigators charged that Edwards had accepted cash payments from people and companies who believed he would help them secure the contracts to build casinos in New Orleans, Shreveport, and Lake Charles.



### The End of an Era

Edwards left office for the last time in 1996. Five years later, he was tried on twenty-six federal charges related to accusations of using his office and influence improperly to help friends, associates, and those who paid him bribes to gain state contracts and casino licenses. This time, Edwards was convicted on seventeen of those counts. He was sentenced to ten years in prison, and served eight years before being released in 2011 at the age of 83.

In the end, his legacy was a mixed one, both for himself and for the people of Louisiana. Edwards had risen from a childhood of poverty to become a much beloved governor who did many good things for the people of the state. Despite his conviction for corruption, Edwards was still drawing large audiences of admirers in the years immediately after his release from prison. He also continued to proclaim his innocence and to defend his legacy as the state's most elected and, for many people, most beloved political figure of the twentieth century.

## Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: mandate, white supremacist, affirmative action.
2. Why was it commonly agreed that the Louisiana Constitution of 1921 needed to be replaced?
3. How many terms did Edwin Edwards serve as governor? How was he able to serve that many times when the "term limits" are two terms?

**Above:** Governor Edwards won approval in 1992 for the construction of a land-based casino in New Orleans. Harrah's New Orleans opened in 1999 on Canal Street near the Mississippi River.

**Below:** Mike Foster, the grandson of a Democratic governor, won the governor's election in 1995 as a Republican. **Right:** Cleo Fields was runner-up to Mike Foster in the 1995 general election. Fields had become the youngest state legislator ever elected in Louisiana when he won a state Senate seat at age 24. He also served two terms in the U.S. Congress.

## Section 2

# Contemporary Governors

### As you read, look for

- ▶ attempts by Mike Foster to restore dignity to the governor's office;
- ▶ how Kathleen Blanco's response to Hurricane Katrina led to a negative assessment of her term in office;
- ▶ the election of the nation's first Indian American governor;
- ▶ terms: **polling, privatize.**

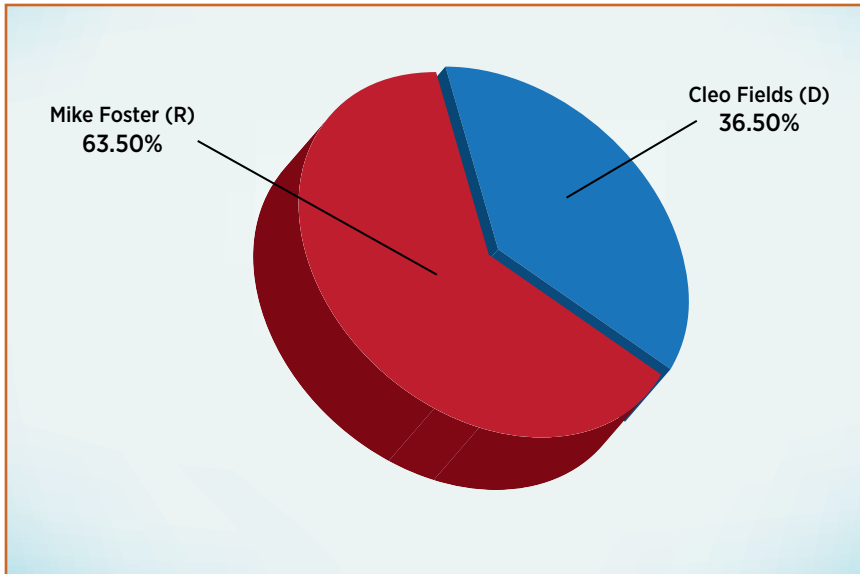
To date, no governor after 1996 has had the kind of electoral success enjoyed by Edwin Edwards. Nor have the state's most recent governors been quite so colorful in terms of their personalities and public statements. However, for many voters, a more dignified public image seemed to be appealing.



### Mike Foster as Governor, 1996-2004

Mike Foster was elected governor for a term that began in 1996. Reflecting the view that Edwards had misused his office, Foster promised he would bring fair decision-making back to state government and to the awarding of state contracts. Although his grandfather Murphy Foster had been governor in the late nineteenth century, Mike Foster was not well known when he entered the race. However, he had a history of accomplishment as a state legislator and a solid record of success in business. Foster was wealthy enough to begin his campaign by using his own money. He argued that, because he was already wealthy, he would not be tempted to engage in corruption to enrich himself.





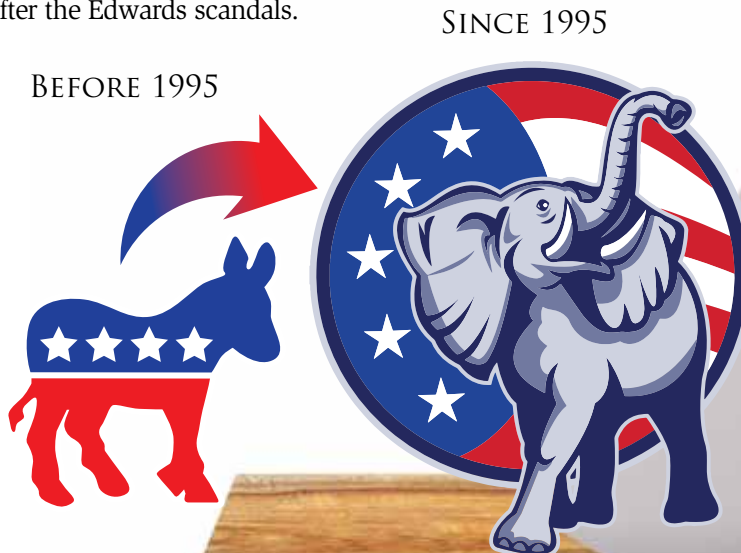
**Figure 15.2**

**Louisiana Governor's Race - 1995**

Does this graph show results of the open primary or the general election?

Foster had been a lifelong Democrat, but he changed his party affiliation to Republican to run for governor. That decision seemed to benefit him in a crowded field that included several Democrats. His only other Republican opponent was the one-term governor Buddy Roemer, who failed to pose a serious challenge. Foster ran in the general election against an African American legislator named Cleo Fields, over whom he won a decisive victory.

Foster served two terms: from 1996 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2004. In his second term as in his first, the governor passed measures designed to assure people that their state government was run fairly rather than on the basis of favoritism. Foster also strongly supported educational institutions at all levels, raising salaries for teachers and upgrading neglected facilities at the state's universities. As he left office in 2004, some critics charged that he had not done enough to attract new businesses to Louisiana or to shrink the size and scope of government. Despite those criticisms, Foster did return dignity and calm to the governor's mansion after the Edwards scandals.



Since 1995, the elephant (symbol of the Republican Party) has dominated the donkey (symbol of the Democratic Party) in Louisiana. The elephant and donkey have been popular representations of the two parties since they appeared in an 1874 Thomas Nast cartoon.



**Middle:** After defeating Bobby Jindal in the 2003 governor’s race, Kathleen Blanco served one term as governor from 2004-2008.

### Kathleen Blanco as Governor, 2004-2008

Like Edwin Edwards, Kathleen Blanco came from the Acadian region of the state. She was born in Coteau in 1943. She worked briefly as a teacher, married in 1964, and had six children. Blanco and her husband ran a successful small business that did research and **polling** (questioning persons to obtain information or opinions). She decided to enter electoral politics in the early 1980s. Blanco was elected to the state legislature and to the Public Service Commission before being elected lieutenant governor in 1995. After two terms as lieutenant governor, Blanco ran for governor in 2003. She won a narrow victory over her general election challenger, a Republican U.S. congressman named Bobby Jindal. In the process,

she became the first woman elected governor of the state.

In the first year and a half of her term, Blanco focused on improving educational opportunity and facilities. She also raised salaries for teachers.

However, when Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana in late August 2005, local, state, and federal officials were unprepared to deal with the crisis that followed. Blanco disagreed with federal officials about how to handle the response, and this led to her being blamed for a delay in the arrival of federal help.



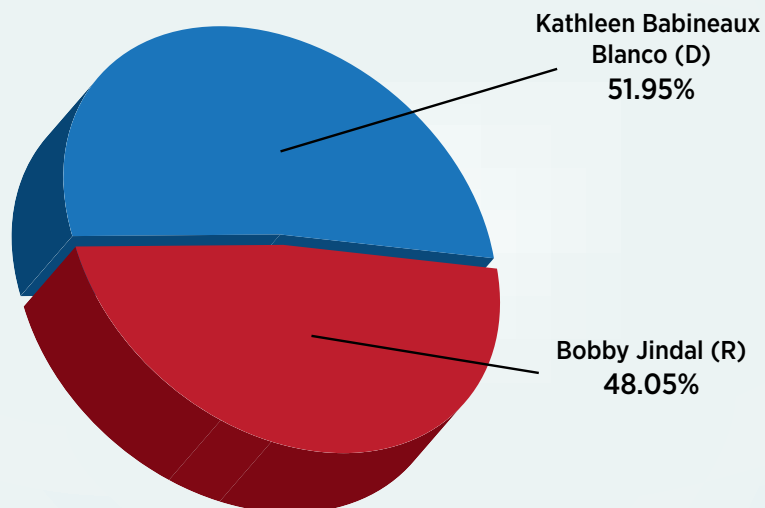
### Lagniappe

Another victim of Hurricane Katrina was the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, which had opened in New Orleans in 1990. Though it was not flooded or damaged by Katrina, loss of electricity killed most of its 10,000 fish. The aquarium reopened nine months later.

**Figure 15.3**

#### Louisiana Governor’s Race - 2003

What additional percentage of voters would Jindal have had to win over to earn a majority (50.01%) of votes?





**Left:** Governor Kathleen Blanco discusses Hurricane Rita with U.S. Coast Guard Vice Admiral Thad Allen, left, and U.S. Army Lt. General Russel Honoré, right.

Like many other officials in New Orleans and the nation’s capital, Blanco was widely thought to have performed poorly after the storm. Her final years in office were taken up with recovery efforts and in securing federal funds to help people return to the state and rebuild after the storms of 2005. She also lobbied for funds to protect and restore Louisiana’s coastal areas. In part because of the negative assessment of her performance after Katrina, Blanco chose not to run for a second term.

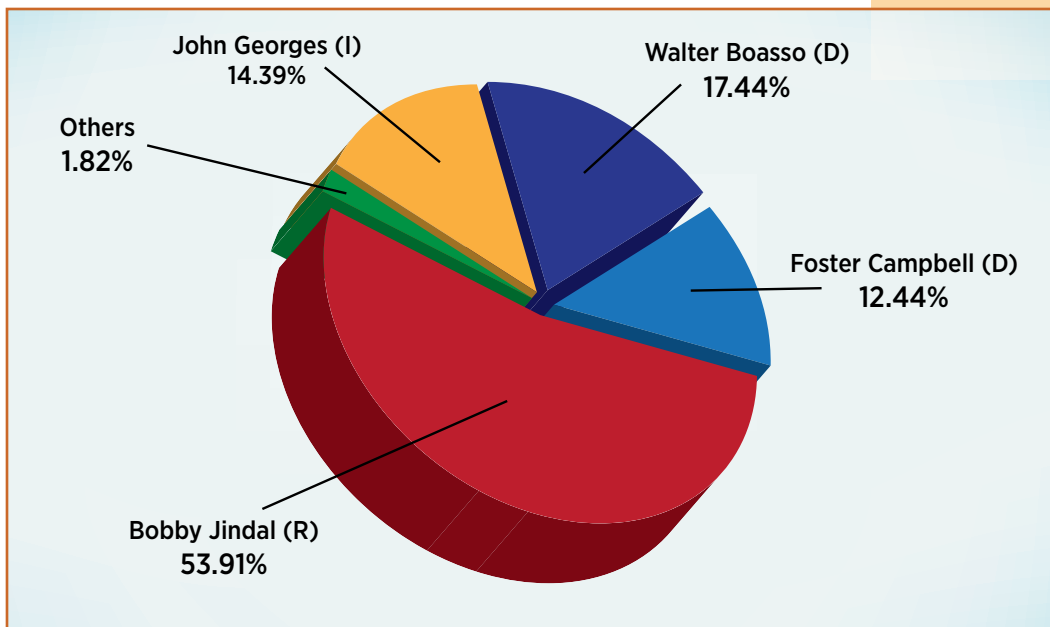
**Bobby Jindal as Governor, 2008-**

Bobby Jindal, Blanco’s close competitor in the 2003 election, cruised to an easy victory over three main opponents in the 2007 campaign for governor. He won impressive victories in all but four of the state’s sixty-four parishes. When he was inaugurated governor in 2008, he became the nation’s first Indian American governor. The showcase accomplishment of Jindal’s first term was a package of ethics reform laws designed to end Louisiana’s reputation for corruption once and for all. Whether the reforms will succeed over time remains an open question.

**Figure 15.4**  
**Louisiana Governor’s Race - 2007**  


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 What does “(I)” stand for beside John Georges’s name?



## Lagniappe

Piyush Jindal was born in Baton Rouge six months after his parents immigrated to the U.S. from India. When he was a young boy, Piyush changed his name to Bobby, taking the name of one of the characters in the TV show *The Brady Bunch*.



At the beginning of his second term in 2012, Jindal undertook extensive reforms of the state's education and health care systems. In both areas, Jindal took an approach that favored privatizing functions that had, for decades, been state run and administered. To **privatize** is to remove something from government control and place it in private control or ownership. Jindal had a great deal of success in the legislature in his first five years in office.

In 2013, he tried to gain legislative support for a broad set of changes in the state's taxation structure. Legislators refused to go along with that plan, and Jindal withdrew it from consideration.

Despite the worldwide economic downturn that began in 2008, oil, gas, and petrochemical businesses in Louisiana remain numerous, profitable, and extremely important to the state's economy. In early 2014, the governor took a trip to countries in Asia to try to attract new businesses to the state. Because he is not allowed to seek a third consecutive term, his second term ends when a new governor is inaugurated in 2016.



**Top:** Bobby Jindal began a second term as governor in 2012. **Above:** Governor Jindal talks to residents of Krotz Springs during the 2011 flooding of the Mississippi River.

## Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: polling, privatize.
2. What aspect of Kathleen Blanco's governorship was considered to be unsuccessful?
3. Name two of Governor Bobby Jindal's successes and one of his failures.

# Special FEATURE

## Louisiana's Shrinking Coast and Wetlands

Did you know that, every hour, Louisiana loses a football-field-size area of wetlands? Louisiana has over 3 million acres of wetlands, which is almost 40 percent of all the wetlands in the United States. Unfortunately, Louisiana has over 80 percent of wetland losses in the United States each year. Between 1932 and 2000, Louisiana lost 1,900 square miles of wetlands, which is like losing the landmass of New York City every 13 years! If the current rate of erosion continues, another 640,000 acres will be underwater by 2050. That's an area almost the size of Rhode Island!

The Mississippi Delta and its surrounding wetlands are among the fastest-disappearing landmasses in the world. There are many different causes leading to the rapid coastal and wetland erosion. Some of the causes include climate change, major shifts of the Mississippi River, rising sea levels, saltwater intrusion, and land subsidence (sinking). Construction of levees has prevented seasonal flooding that is necessary for healthy wetlands. The Louisiana barrier islands are also eroding and can no longer provide protection for the wetlands.

The consequences of continued coastal erosion are severe. Louisiana's coast is essential to both Louisiana and the United States. Louisiana's commercial fisheries provide 25 to 35 percent of the nation's total catch. One-fourth of the United States' energy supply depends on support facilities in South Louisiana. About 65 percent of Louisiana's population lives within fifty miles of the coast. If the current rate of erosion continues, many people will have to move inland.

The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) is working to find solutions to stop and reverse coastal erosion. In 2012, the Louisiana legislature passed the \$50 billion Coastal Master Plan. The goal of this plan is to increase flood protection for citizens; save and build land, marsh, and barrier islands; and create a sustainable coast. One specific way the CPRA is working to reverse erosion is by creating holes in levees. These holes (also called diversions) will divert the muddy water from the river and allow it to flow into the marsh to deposit settlement. Another proposed solution is dredging the rivers and Gulf of Mexico for sediment and then pumping the sediment into open water that is still shallow enough to be reclaimed. Do you think it is worth spending so much of your family's tax dollars to save the shrinking coast?



## Section 3

# Continuity and Change in Contemporary Louisiana

**Top:** New Orleans is still Louisiana's largest city, despite losing population after Hurricane Katrina. By 2013, the city had regained much of its pre-storm population. **Bottom:** Baton Rouge, the state capital, is our second-largest city.

## As you read, look for

- ▶ changes in population trends in Louisiana;
- ▶ successes and failures in the field of education;
- ▶ continuing problems with poverty and crime;
- ▶ gains for African Americans and women;
- ▶ hope for the future of our unique state;
- ▶ terms: **white flight, incarceration, *laissez les bon temps rouler***.

Many things have changed in Louisiana since Edwin Edwards first became governor in 1972. Other aspects of life in the Bayou State, including many stubborn social problems, continue to challenge Louisiana's people.

## Figure 15.5

### Population of Louisiana

What caused the drastic population decline that began in 2005?

## Population

Although many people left the state during the oil crisis of the late 1980s, the state's population has continued to grow slowly since then. However, the very low growth rate shows that the state is falling behind other surrounding states in population growth. In the two decades between 1990 and 2010, the state's overall population rose by more than 300,000 people, but the rate of growth dropped from 5.9 percent between 1990 and 2000 to only 1.4 percent between 2000 and 2010.





People also continued to move to new locations within the state. There was a large shift in population from cities to suburbs that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Population experts describe this trend, which followed federally ordered school desegregation, as **white flight** (the movement of white residents from cities to less racially integrated suburban communities). As a result, suburban parishes like St. Tammany outside New Orleans and Ascension near Baton Rouge have experienced very high rates of growth in the last few decades.



As of 2010, New Orleans and Baton Rouge remained the state's two largest cities, followed by Shreveport in third place. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the population of New Orleans shrank drastically. By 2013, however, the city had regained much of its pre-storm population. While the city remains majority African American, the percentage of African American residents shrank by several percentage points.

Statewide, the percentage of African American population held steady between 2000 and 2010 at 32 percent. Meanwhile, the white population shrank by 1 percent, but remained the state's majority ethnic group at 62.6 percent. The largest area of population growth took place among Hispanics. Many of them migrated to the state after the 2005 hurricanes, seeking work in the booming construction industry. According to the 2012 edition of the *Louisiana Almanac*, the "Hispanic population grew nearly 79 percent to represent 4.2 percent" of the state's population in the 2010 census. Asians make up the remaining 1.5 percent of the state's major population groups.

## Education

In the area of education, the state has struggled to improve opportunities and outcomes for students in its public schools. The growth and maintenance of educational facilities suffered during and after the oil crisis of the 1980s. Governors Edwards, Foster, and Blanco all made funding and improving education a high priority, but the state's overall performance continued to compare unfavorably with that of other states.

**Above:** Decatur Street in the French Quarter is a popular destination for visitors to New Orleans.



In his second term, Governor Jindal is in the midst of reform efforts designed to change the way education is offered and funded in the state. Those changes, which he believes will improve educational outcomes for students in low-performing schools, have been challenged in court and by educators around the state. Current reform efforts and drastic funding cuts have created an uncertain environment for students and educators as the state entered the second decade of the twenty-first century.

A 2013 report that evaluated educational outcomes across the nation placed Louisiana's schools at or near the bottom of its survey results. Despite these disappointing figures, the state's overall test scores, reading scores, and graduation rates have risen significantly in the last decade. These hopeful signs suggest that educators and students are working hard to improve outcomes despite persistent challenges.

### Poverty and Well Being

Louisiana's poverty rates also remain among the highest in the nation. Among other things, this means that many poor people do not receive adequate health care. The misuse of federal Medicaid funds in Louisiana and other states brought the practice of awarding poor states a disproportionate share of Medicaid funds to an end in the late 1990s. In the years since then, the state has often struggled to fund its public hospitals and health care facilities. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, politicians and health care providers debated about how best to provide health care to the state's people, particularly its large population of poor citizens. Those questions remain unresolved.

### Incarceration and Crime

Criminal activity and violent crime also remain a troubling part of the state's present reality. Violent crime rates remain very high, and the state's murder rates are among the highest in the nation, especially in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Louisiana also has the highest rates of **incarceration** (putting people in prison) in the nation. Yet, despite jailing such a high percentage of its population, criminality and violence remain troubling parts of everyday life, particularly in urban areas. Concerns about crime have contributed to the decision of many citizens to move to suburban areas with lower crime rates and more aggressive policing. Within cities, many people have begun to live in gated communities or to pay a special tax for increased police patrols within their neighborhoods.

**Top:** Aerial view of New Orleans.

## Change, Challenges, and the Future

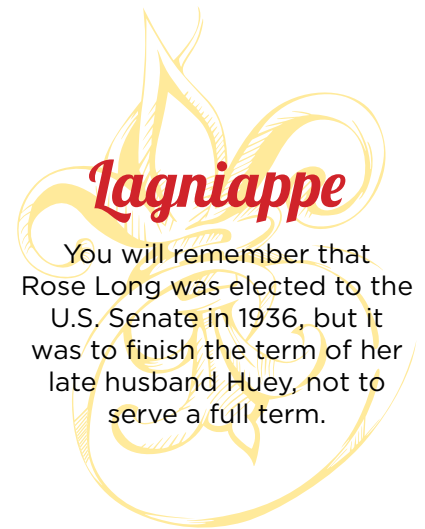
Despite all the bad news, many positive changes have taken place in Louisiana in recent decades. Just as African Americans made social and political gains from the mid-1960s forward, so did the state's women. The 1974 Constitution offered protection from many forms of discrimination. Additionally, the state's head and master laws were ruled unconstitutional and came to an end in 1980. Today, women do not lose their legal rights or independence when they marry. While, on average, women in Louisiana continue to earn far less than men for the same kinds of work, the possibilities to achieve economic success and social equality are higher in the twenty-first century than in any previous time in the state's history.

In contemporary Louisiana, women make up the majority of those who finish high school and enroll in colleges and universities. Women also serve or have served at all levels of state government. Currently, the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court is a woman. Many women serve in the legislature and as municipal mayors or council members. At the federal level, Mary Landrieu was the first woman elected to a full term in the U.S. Senate from Louisiana. She was first elected in 1996, and is running for a fourth six-year term in 2014. While much progress has been made, the number of women who hold public office remains small in comparison to the number of men who serve in elected positions.

## Economic Diversification

No matter how much people may love the state, without good jobs Louisiana will continue to lag behind other states. Oil, gas, petrochemicals, and the service industries that support them will continue to play an important role in the state's economy for the foreseeable future. In 2014, Governor Jindal suggested that possible areas for economic growth in the future include "automobile manufacturing, industrial machinery, plastics, rubber products, chemicals," and software.

Tourism is also critical to the state's economy. In 2012, more than 26 million people visited the state and created more than \$10 billion in economic activity. New Orleans is still one of the nation's most popular tourist destinations. Tourism officials are working hard to expand the level of visitation to other areas of the state as well. The many films and television shows made around the state reflect the state's natural beauty and diversity. They also entice people who see the state's many locales to visit them in person. In recent years television shows like *Swamp People* and *Duck Dynasty* have showcased unique cultures in different areas of the state and have drawn large numbers of viewers.



You will remember that Rose Long was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1936, but it was to finish the term of her late husband Huey, not to serve a full term.

**Below:** Mardi Gras season in New Orleans lasts from January 6 through "Fat Tuesday," the day before Ash Wednesday.







## Cultural Diversity

Besides having a rich history, beautiful cities and towns to visit, and many different kinds of natural settings to enjoy, the state's people also continue to preserve historic forms of culture even as they create new ones. Writers, musicians, artists, photographers, chefs, and many other creative people transform life and their experiences in Louisiana into various forms of art. Whether they write novels, paint portraits, take photographs, make music, or cook beautiful meals, Louisiana's people continue to create and to share cultural riches at a rate that defies the state's many other negative aspects.

In his third campaign for governor, Edwin Edwards often used the slogan *laissez les bon temps rouler* ("let the good times roll") to describe the joyous way that many people approach life in Louisiana in good times and bad. The state's citizens have remained committed to making this very special place home, and making life better in whatever ways make the most sense to them. Often, that has included making art that describes those troubles, or defies them by looking on the bright side and enjoying the present, despite the troubles of the past and the challenges of the future.

It is difficult to make predictions about what Louisiana's future holds. If the state's past is any guide, the state will continue to suffer tragedies and will struggle to overcome its longstanding social problems. Its people will also have to confront the ongoing crisis of wetlands loss and coastal erosion. Despite these harsh realities, the state's people have shown great resilience and a willingness to defend a place and a way of life that, for many of them, is both unique and irreplaceable. While presenting firm answers about what Louisiana's future holds is impossible, we hope your newfound knowledge of the state's history will be of use to you. After all, you are likely among the people who will help to shape Louisiana's future in the decades to come.



## Lagniappe

In 2012, the "Spirit of Louisiana" returned to New York. Louisiana had donated a fire truck with that name to New York City to replace a truck that was lost on September 11, 2001. New York returned the equipment to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Louisiana sent the "Spirit" to New York's Long Island after 2012's Superstorm Sandy.

**Top:** George Rodrigue gained fame from his Blue Dog paintings. **Right:** Louisianians welcome crawfish season each spring.

## Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: white flight, incarceration, *laissez les bon temps rouler*.
2. What are some of the gains women have made in contemporary Louisiana?
3. How does tourism contribute to Louisiana's economy? What current and future trends are adding to Louisiana's success as a tourism destination?

# Special FEATURE

## George Rodrigue: The “Blue Dog” Painter

Have you ever seen a painting like this before? If so, you may recognize it as one of the Blue Dog paintings created by one of Louisiana’s most famous artists, George Rodrigue.

Born in 1944, Rodrigue grew up in New Iberia. He discovered his love for art when, at the age of eight, he was confined to bed because of polio. His mother bought him a paint-by-number set, but instead of following the patterns printed on the canvases, Rodrigue painted his own designs. In 1962, Rodrigue attended the University of Southwest Louisiana and later studied at the Art Center College of Design in California.

After finishing school in California, Rodrigue returned to Louisiana armed with an art style that combined the “pop” style of California with the landscapes and people of Louisiana. He created a new category for himself: “Cajun artist.” In 1984, Rodrigue was asked to create a cover illustration for a set of ghost stories called *Bayou*, by Chris Segura. The Blue Dog was the result. It transformed the image of a Cajun werewolf dog, the *loup-garou*, into an international icon!

Rodrigue was a *humanitarian* (a person who does good works to help others) as well as an artist. After the September 11, 2001, attacks and Hurricane Katrina, he donated over \$3 million to humanitarian and arts organizations. In 2009, he founded the Rodrigue Foundation for the Arts to encourage teachers to use art across the curriculum. His foundation also financed scholarships, classroom art supplies, and art education programs. In 2006, Rodrigue was appointed Louisiana’s official artist laureate (honored artist) and received the Lifetime Achievement Arts Award.

Rodrigue was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2011. He died on December 14, 2013, as a result of his illness.

Use the Internet to explore images of his works. Which is your favorite, and why?



# Chapter Review

## Chapter Summary

### Section 1: New Voters and Political Change in the Edwards Era

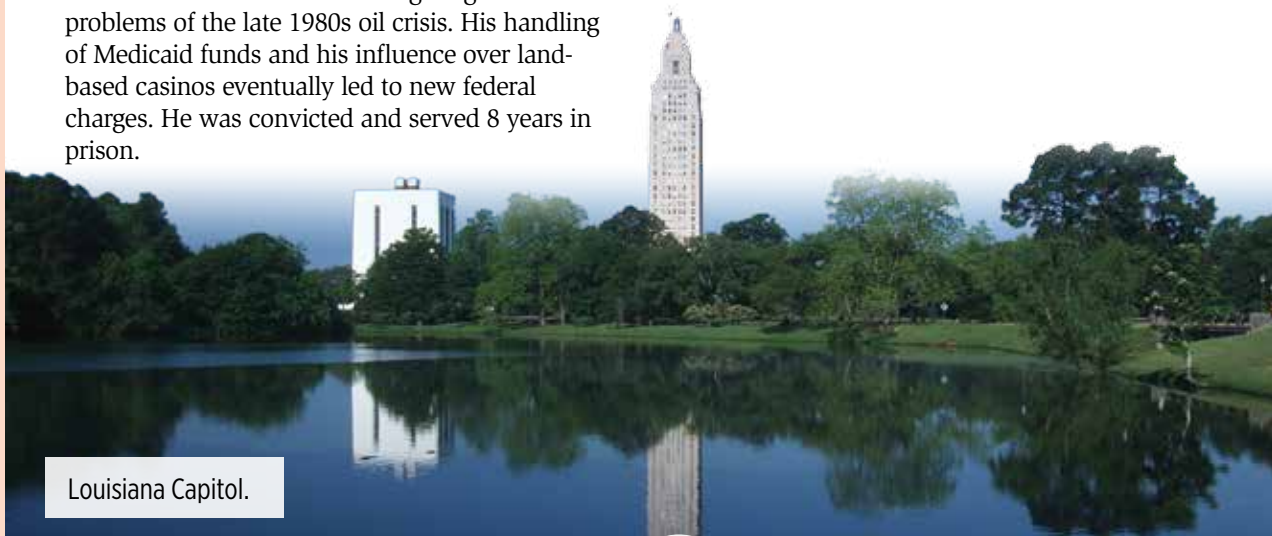
- In 1972, African American and Acadian voters helped Democrat Edwin Edwards win his first term as governor. The Republican Party showed a rise in popularity in this election.
- A 1973 state constitutional convention produced a replacement for the Constitution of 1921. In 1974, voters approved this new constitution.
- Economic reforms backed by Governor Edwards included the elimination of the state property tax, an increase in taxes on corporations and oil and gas, and the change to a value-based severance tax on crude oil.
- Allegations emerged during Governor Edwards's second term regarding his wife's acceptance of gifts and how Edwards influenced the awarding of state contracts.
- In 1979, in the first election using the open primary system, David Treen became Louisiana's first Republican governor since Reconstruction.
- Edwin Edwards's third term was marked by an economic crisis caused by low oil prices. During this term, federal charges brought against Edwards resulted in one mistrial and one not-guilty verdict.
- In the 1991 election, there were lingering suspicions of Edwards's corruption, but also concerns about the racial views of his opponent, David Duke. Edwards won a fourth term handily in the runoff election.
- Governor Edwards faced the lingering economic problems of the late 1980s oil crisis. His handling of Medicaid funds and his influence over land-based casinos eventually led to new federal charges. He was convicted and served 8 years in prison.

### Section 2: Contemporary Governors

- Democrat Mike Foster successfully ran for governor as a Republican and served 2 terms, from 1996 to 2004. Governor Foster raised salaries for teachers, upgraded facilities at state universities, and restored dignity to the governor's office.
- In 2003, Kathleen Blanco, a two-term lieutenant governor, became the first woman elected governor of the state. Criticized for her performance after Hurricane Katrina, she did not run again.
- Bobby Jindal became the nation's first Indian American governor in 2008. He has undertaken reforms of the state's educational and health care systems, favoring privatization.

### Section 3: Continuity and Change in Contemporary Louisiana

- Between 1990 and 2010, the state's population rose more than 300,000, but the growth rate has slowed.
- As of 2010, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport were our largest cities. There has been a shift in population from cities to suburban parishes, like St. Tammany and Ascension.
- A 2013 report placed Louisiana's schools at or near the bottom in the nation. However, the state's overall test scores, reading scores, and graduation rates have risen significantly in the last decade.
- Louisiana's rates of poverty and incarceration are among the nation's highest.
- In 2012, the 26 million visitors to our state created \$10 billion in economic activity.



Louisiana Capitol.

## Activities for Learning

### Understanding the Facts



1. Which two groups of voters helped Edwin Edwards win his first term as governor?
2. What was one of Edwin Edwards's highest priorities during his first term as governor?
3. How did Edwin Edwards increase tax revenue?
4. Who was the first Louisiana Republican since Reconstruction elected to Congress and the governorship?
5. What economic problems did Edwin Edwards face during his third term?
6. What activity was legalized while Charles "Buddy" Roemer was governor?
7. Who were the two candidates in the 1991 gubernatorial election? What percentage of the vote did each candidate receive?
8. How did the state educational system benefit from Mike Foster's two terms as governor?
9. Prior to being elected governor, what political offices did Kathleen Blanco hold?
10. How did Governor Bobby Jindal attempt to reform the state's educational and health care systems?
11. How did Hurricane Katrina affect New Orleans' population?
12. Who was the first Louisiana woman elected to a full term in the U.S. Senate?

### Developing Critical Thinking



1. Louisiana's population increased by 64,396 people from 2000 to 2010. If the population was 4,533,372 in 2010, what was its population in 2000?
2. Louisiana's total area is 52,378 square miles. Now calculate Louisiana's population density by using this formula: Total Population in 2010 ÷ Total Area = Population Density. (Round up your answer.)

### Writing across the Curriculum



Assume you are the author of a biography on Edwin Edwards. Create a title for the biography and design the book jacket. On the front cover, include the title, the author's name, and an illustration. For the front inside cover, write a summary of Edwards's life using facts from this chapter. On the back cover, list the author, title, and an Edwards quotation. On the back inside cover, list your name, date, and class period.

### Exploring Louisiana on the Internet



1. Go to <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>. Next, click on the "Modify Table" and, then, the downward arrow of the second column, "April 1, 2010 Census." When prompted, click the "OK" button. Your table should now be sorted, so that the Louisiana cities with the largest population are listed at the top. List Louisiana's ten largest cities and their population. How many Louisiana cities have a population exceeding 100,000? Where in Louisiana are most of the largest cities located? What is the largest city or town in your parish?
2. Go to [www.census.gov/popfinder/](http://www.census.gov/popfinder/). Select "Louisiana" and, then, click "Display." According to the 2010 Census, what are the five racial groups specifically identified in Louisiana? What is the population of each group?

### Building 21st-Century Skills: Creating a Concept Map



A concept map is a special form of web diagram that is used to develop an understanding of an important concept and/or to explore relationships between ideas. Major ideas are often represented by a word or short phrase enclosed in a rectangle. Rectangles are connected to other ideas, terms, and descriptive words by arrows. In creating a concept map, you might ask yourself: What are the important people, events, issues, and terms connected with this concept?

In this chapter there are three sections, each involving a major concept. Review Section 1. You will find a description of each of Edwards's four terms as governor including accomplishments, failings, and political opponents in each election, and the major events during his term. There are several other terms mentioned in connection with the Edwards era.

Now, create a concept map diagram incorporating the accomplishments, failings, people, events, and terms from this section while also showing their interconnections.

