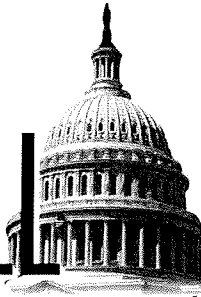


ON THE HILL



News from the Louisiana delegation in the nation's capital
by Bruce Alpert and Jonathan Tilove

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Melancon reports increase

Democratic Rep. **Charlie Melancon's** U.S. Senate campaign reported that it raised \$600,000 during the last quarter of 2009, giving the congressman \$2 million in cash for his race against incumbent Republican Sen. **David Vitter**. Melancon campaign manager Bradley Beychok said the fundraising reflected an "outpouring of support for his candidacy." The Melancon campaign said he had raised more money than three successful Democratic candidates at a comparable time in the 2008 election cycle, though none of the three had the advantage of cash left over from a previous congressional campaign, as did Melancon. Melancon lags behind Vitter, who reported raising \$1.2 million during the same quarter and has more than twice as much in his campaign treasury.

Best seat in the House

State Rep. **Cedric Richmond**, the New Orleans Democrat who hopes to be seated on the floor of Congress for the next State of the Union Address, had perhaps an even better seat this year — two rows behind **Michelle Obama** and right behind the Haitian ambassador, in the most exclusive box in the House gallery. "I thought it was one of his best speeches," said Richmond, who got the plum seat thanks to House Majority Whip **James Clyburn**, D-S.C. While Clyburn has been a good friend to New Orleans in Congress since Hurricane Katrina, in an interview last week about the health-care bill, he told The Associated Press, "We've got to get rid of that Nebraska stuff, we've got to get rid of the Louisiana stuff," referring to special Medicaid provisions added to attract the votes of Sens. **Mary Landrieu**, D-La, and **Ben Nelson**, R-Neb. In a couple of statements in

the past week, the president also made some negative references to the Nebraska and Louisiana deals ("some stray dogs and cats that got in there that we were in the process of eliminating," he told Republicans when he met with them Friday.) But Richmond said that the Louisiana Medicaid fix was perfectly justifiable and that Landrieu ought to be congratulated, not lambasted, for her efforts, and that if the money is removed from the health care bill, another legislative avenue will have to be found.

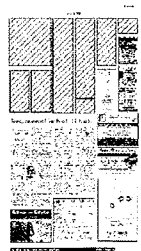
Former aide freed

Two key witnesses in last summer's corruption trial of former Rep. **William Jefferson** have been freed from federal prison. **Vernon Jackson**, 57, the CEO of iGate Inc., who ran a Kentucky company seeking telecommunications contracts in Nigeria and Ghana, was released Monday. **Brett Pfeffer**, 41, a former

Jefferson aide who introduced the nine-term Democratic congressman to wealthy investor **Lori Mody**, was released three days earlier. Mody ended up as a key government informant, secretly recording conversations with Jefferson. Both Jackson and Pfeffer pleaded guilty in 2006 to charges related to what the federal government says was a scheme in which the then-congressman collected payments to family-owned businesses in return for his help in winning contracts in Western Africa. Both told their lawyers that they are happy to be free, but so far have declined any public comment. Jackson and Pfeffer served nearly 33 months in prison — less than half what they were sentenced to by Judge **T.S. Ellis III** but a far lengthier sentence than they anticipated when they entered guilty pleas.

Coastal footballs will fly

In conjunction with the Saints' coming appearance in the Super Bowl, footballs will be flying on Capitol Hill on Wednesday with much of official Washington — members of Congress, the Obama administration and journalists — the intended receivers. The 700 colorful miniature footballs, courtesy of Louisiana's **America's Wetlands** Foundation and Women of the Storm, carry a map of Louisiana and the message that a football field of land is lost each hour to coastal erosion, making communities in South Louisiana vulnerable to storm surge. Cards with the words "Be a Saint, save our Coast — invest in America's future" are attached to the footballs. Saints Owner/Executive Vice President **Rita Benson LeBlanc**, a member of the Women of the Storm, a group formed after Katrina to focus national attention on rebuilding issues, said: "We hope that our winning ways will add to the attention to save one of the most essential natural resources in the world." **Anne Milling**, the group's founder, added: "New Orleans and south Louisiana face a continuing threat because the coastal lands that once protected our more than 2 million residents continue to disappear." She and



others involved in the avalanche of D.C.-bound footballs hope the popularity of the Saints (even Chicago Bear fan President Barack Obama's made the team his sentimental pick) will convince even Indianapolis Colts fans to pay attention to the state's ongoing coastal threats.

Vikings fan pays up

Sen. **Amy Klobuchar**, D-Minn., is the daughter of the longtime Minnesota sportswriter **Jim Klobuchar**, who wrote the book "Will the Vikings Ever Win the Super Bowl?" So there is no overstating how seriously she took the Vikings' loss last Sunday to the New Orleans Saints. But Klobuchar, whose comic timing is at least as good as that of her Minnesota colleague, **Al Franken**, was at her good-natured best when she came to Sen. **Mary Landrieu's** office Wednesday dressed in a **Drew Brees** jersey (and Vikings hat) and Saints' beads to deliver a pot of gumbo she cooked to pay off a bet on the game with Landrieu. (If the Vikings had won, Landrieu would have had to cook a Minnesota wild rice casserole.) As Landrieu was tasting the gumbo, Klobuchar suggested, with just a little edge, that perhaps they should have had someone there to judge its quality, "like the officials at the game, because they were so accurate." When Landrieu proclaimed the gumbo good but a bit bland and handed Klobuchar a huge bottle of Tabasco, Klobuchar turned the bottle upside down over her creation, dispensing probably a quarter cup of hot sauce into her little crock-pot of gumbo. Trying it again, her eyes widened. Next up, a "friendly wager" between Rep. **Steve Scalise**, R-Jefferson, and **Andre Carson**, a Democrat from Indianapolis, on the outcome of the Super Bowl. If the Saints win, Scalise will receive

a glazed doughnut and a corned beef sandwich. And if the Saints should somehow lose, Scalise will be delivering alligator sausage and blackened redfish to Carson.

Cao aide returns home

Friday was the last day at work for Rep. **Anh "Joseph" Cao's** communications director **Princella Smith**, who is leaving to explore a race for Congress in her native Arkansas. "I've enjoyed my time with Congressman Cao," Smith said. "He is truly an inspirational individual." While Cao is seen as facing an uphill battle for re-election in the overwhelmingly Democratic district, Smith said, "He's special; I think he's going to win." Her ambition now is to return to Capitol Hill as Cao's colleague, and in the next few weeks she will decide whether to seek the Republican nomination to succeed Rep. **Marion Berry**, D-Ark., who just announced his plans not to seek re-election.

Landrieu applauds move

Senate Small Business Committee Chairman **Mary Landrieu**, D-La., is praising President **Barack Obama** for proposing tax breaks to encourage start-up companies, which she says has a great potential to create jobs. "With more than a million small businesses eligible to take advantage of these tax credits, the proposal is an excellent way to spur small business job creation," Landrieu said. Still, Landrieu said a number of proposals have been proposed to encourage small business expansion, and that she'll look to come up with the package most likely to achieve the job growth sought by the administration and members of Congress.