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Louisiana Senate will reduce funding for Gov. Landry's private school vouchers, chamber leader says

BY: JULIE O'DONOGHUE - MAY 28, 2025 7:03 AM



📷 Senate President Cameron Henry, left, speaks with Sen. Pat Connick in the Louisiana Senate on May 27, 2025. (Wes Muller/Louisiana Illuminator)

The Louisiana Senate president said his chamber will dramatically scale back funding for the new private school voucher program [from what Gov. Jeff Landry and the House of Representatives](#) have pledged.

Sen. Cameron Henry, R-Metairie, has said [for weeks](#) that the Senate will only fund the new program with \$50 million for 2025-26, its

first school year. The governor and House lawmakers have allocated considerably more – \$94 million – for LA GATOR [in their own budget proposals](#).

At \$50 million, LA GATOR would only be able to cover the private school tuition costs of 6,000 students in Louisiana's existing school voucher program for the 2025-2026 school year. Landry has pushed to expand private school assistance to 5,300 more children by spending \$44 million more.

Yet Henry has expressed skepticism about the new voucher initiative and said the Senate voted last year to set up LA GATOR on the condition it would be rolled out cautiously. Senators agreed to cover education expenses for longstanding voucher students in its first year, but no more than that, he said.

"We originally agreed there would be \$50 million, and we're going to stick with that," Henry said in an interview with reporters Tuesday.



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LA GATOR will use state tax dollars to pay for private school student expenses, including tuition, uniforms, after-school tutoring and computers. Those who homeschool could also use LA GATOR to cover their education costs.

Eventually, the program is meant to have no income restrictions – meaning students from wealthy, middle-class and poor families could all qualify for the publicly funded private school assistance. In the first year of the program, however, it was expected to be confined mostly to low-income students and children with disabilities because of the limited slots available.

Landry touts LA GATOR as one of his signature initiatives and has put public pressure on Henry to dedicate more money to the program.

Earlier this month, the governor attended [a rally near the State Capitol in support of LA GATOR](#) with more than 100 students from New Orleans-area private schools. Landry [led the students in a](#)

[chant](#) of “Please support GATOR scholarships!” in the courtyard of the Pentagon Barracks, the dormitory for state lawmakers during the legislative session.

Louisiana homeowners might get option to insure their properties for ‘stated value’



The Louisiana House of Representatives approved a bill Tuesday that would require insurance companies to let homeowners purchase “stated value” policies, which cover the home for an amount they declare rather than for its full market value. House Bill 356, sponsored by Rep. Jacob Braud, R-Belle

Chasse, cleared the chamber in a 79-20 vote and ... [Continue reading](#)



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Conservative groups aligned with Landry have also launched advertising campaigns in recent weeks that promote the LA GATOR scholarship and that urge Henry and other senators [to “fully fund” the program](#).

But on Tuesday, Henry appeared unfazed by the political pressure.

“Not all conservative Republicans agree with what the governor wants to do,” he said.

Instead of spending an extra \$44 million on LA GATOR, Henry said the Senate would put the money toward a tutoring program for kindergarten to third-grade students that launched last year but is currently unfunded in the budget.

The extra money could also be used to cover pay increases for public school teachers who work in hard-to-fill positions such as special education, math and science. Some of the money could also go to local sheriffs who house state prisoners, Henry said.

The senator's primary concern over LA GATOR is the long-term impact on state finances. He worries the program could potentially become so expensive as it expands that it would be harder for the state to pay for infrastructure projects, higher education and other priorities.

Similar private education voucher programs have caused money problems in other states. The Texas voucher program is expected to cost \$1 billion per year when it starts in 2026. The Florida program, started in 2023, costs \$3.9 billion, or one out of every \$13 of that state government's general fund, according to the Associated Press,

A large chunk of voucher funding in Florida and Arizona goes to wealthy families. Over two-thirds of the students drawing down the grants in Florida already went to private school before receiving the voucher, according to the *Tampa Bay Times*.

Henry would like to prevent a similar situation in Louisiana, wherein the state finds itself subsidizing private education for families who would pay for it otherwise. He fears LA GATOR would result in the state not only having to pay for public schools, but also private schools it doesn't currently support.

"We also don't want this to turn into where people are just creating schools just for [LA GATOR]," Henry said. "The point is to have established schools or programs that are helping these kids move from where they are to where they want to be."

University of New Orleans transfer to LSU System expected to cost \$23 million this year



Louisiana lawmakers are advancing legislation to transfer the University of New Orleans from the University of Louisiana System to the LSU System at a cost of about \$23 million, Senate President Cameron Henry, R-Metairie, said. Senate Bill 202 by Sen. Jimmy Harris, D-New Orleans, unanimously passed the Senate

Tuesday. It will next be discussed in ... [Continue reading](#)

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The same education advocates pushing for LA GATOR also pressed for Louisiana's current voucher program, set up under former Gov. Bobby Jindal in 2012. That initiative, which is focused exclusively on low-income families, has failed to live up to its promises, Henry said.

Students enrolled in the Jindal voucher program have performed worse on standardized tests than their peers in public schools, [according to *The Times-Picayune*](#), despite the state spending a half a billion dollars on their private education over the past decade. Voucher advocates deserve skepticism after they promoted a program that performed poorly, according to Henry.

"If the voucher program was doing so well, we wouldn't be changing it," he said.

The Senate is expected to unveil its markup of the budget next week and will have to reach a compromise with the Louisiana House over the final product by June 12.

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