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Bobby Jindal administration questioning education contracts



By [The Associated Press](#)
on December 16, 2014 at 9:42 PM



Gov. Bobby Jindal's administration raised questions Tuesday whether Superintendent of Education John White is dividing his department's contracts into smaller pieces to sidestep oversight and public bid requirements.

The questions sparked immediate criticism from the president of the state's top school board, who accused the administration of harassing the education department because of an ongoing disagreement over the Common Core education standards.

The Office of State Procurement sent White a letter saying it found a "questionable volume" of small contracts ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,000 that the department entered into since July 1.

State law provides certain dollar benchmarks for when contracts must be publicly bid, depending on contract type. Also, since July, the Jindal administration has required the Department of Education to get approval for any contract above \$2,000.

"Artificially dividing contracts to avoid the bid process is a violation of procurement law. To ensure these contracts do not circumvent bid laws, we are requesting copies of all 66 contracts for review," Paul Holmes, interim director of the procurement office, wrote to White.

White said the small-dollar contracts pay teachers for designing professional development sessions, lesson plans and sample test questions that are posted online for other teachers to use. His executive counsel, Joan Hunt, wrote a response letter, saying that suggestions the agency did anything improper were "false, baseless and without merit."

"Educators already struggle to make ends meet in exchange for the vital work they perform. Having to defend the minimal amounts that teachers are to be paid under these little contracts, in exchange for important and time-consuming work, is offensive," Hunt wrote.

Chas Roemer, president of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, blasted the Jindal administration for sending the letter, saying it was designed to badger the education department as part of a running dispute over Common Core.

Jindal once supported the multistate standards as improving student preparation for college and careers. But the governor now opposes Common Core as an effort by President Barack Obama's administration to meddle in state education policy.

White and a majority of education board members still support Common Core, and state lawmakers have refused to stop use of the standards in Louisiana's public school classrooms.

After Jindal switched positions, he tried to suspend contracts that White intended to use to pay for testing material aligned with Common Core, but a state judge lifted the suspension. Administration leaders have accused White's department of not properly following Louisiana's procurement law, and they've increased scrutiny and restrictions on its contracts.

Roemer said the education department has had small contracts with teachers to help develop educational content for years. He said they never raised administration eyebrows until the fight over Common Core.

"These guys are the most absurd people I've ever seen running government, and it's a joke," Roemer said. "The last time I saw this many clowns I was at the circus. Meanwhile, we need to get on with educating the students of this state, and this guy is wasting our time."

A spokeswoman for Jindal's Division of Administration said the contract review was a "normal part of doing business."

"If any agency had executed this volume of small contracts in this timeframe, we would ask questions. The Division is obligated to ensure the use of public funding follows the law," Meghan Parrish said in a statement.



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nickelndime

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Walter Lee resigned from BESE and got "the chair" in his living room. Jindal may be a clown, but Roemer is a thieving clown. We need 7 more BESE resignations, beginning with Roemer, and if Jay Guillot ever shows up in a public BESE meeting again, I would like him fingerprinted. \$2,000 for teaches! That is insulting. White doesn't have the barest qualifications to even teach in a vouchered classroom, much less a public classroom. White and the bunch of cronies in Baton Rouge are pilfering millions of dollars of public education money and they throw \$2,000 trinkets at teachers. Roemer cannot criticize Jindal with a straight face, nor can he pretend shock. Do I think that White is doing exactly what he is being accused of? Absolutely! 12/17/2014 6:26 PM

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squirly26

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How dare anyone under the Jindal Administration try to actually educate the children! Of all the sneaky, underhanded and conniving things the Jindal Administration does in the name of 'helping the citizens,' they call out agencies and individuals that actually attempt to help us.

I personally am sick and tired of Gov. Jindal and his cronies holding us hostage for his political gains. It's so obvious to most folks what's going on, it's sickening...

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Bob LaBlaugh

2 days ago

Roemer for Governor!

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BenYae

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Right on, Roemer! Jindal is a clown and a dirty fighter. The little feller must be in an especially bad mood. Two polls, two days in a row, have given him a one-two punch. The McClatchy Marist poll and a Fox News poll each show Jindal with one percent support. He is 14th out of 15 in one poll and 13th out of 14 in another.

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andouilledat

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Country Hardball politics on both sides of this one - first the \$2,000 rule, then avoid oversight then the response. Back and forth, back and forth, thrust and parry, wearing down the resources while in the meantime no reading, writing nor math gets done. Pure country, got to love 'em.

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Sonny 41

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Only 12 states intend to use PARCC testing which will soon lose federal funding due to the lack of participation. Providing lip service while continuing to drain education funding is just sad. Testing will not solve our education problems and neither will lowering the standards.

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nickelndime

20 hours ago

Hear! Hear! Testing is not a substitute for instruction. 12/17/2014 6:29 PM

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endhate

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"These guys are the most absurd people I've ever seen running government, and it's a joke," Roemer said. "The last time I saw this many clowns I was at the circus. Meanwhile, we need to get on with educating the students of this state, and this guy is wasting our time."

Best Quote I've read all year. Imao

4 Like Reply



broadmoorer
@endhate LOL

2 days ago

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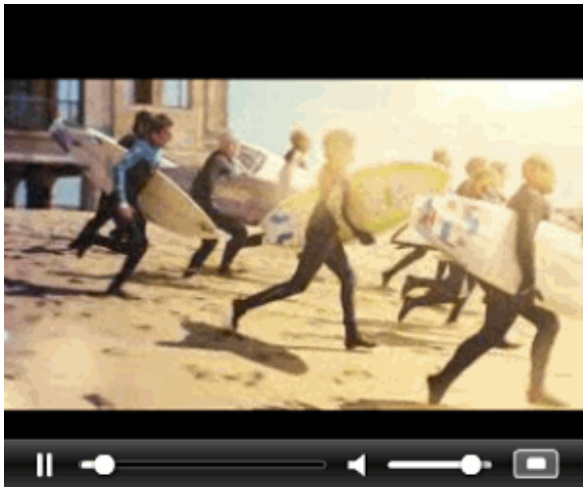


NOLACitizenVoter

2 days ago

Bobby Jindal, does God want you to be questioning education contracts? You had better be careful there!

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