Au Secours! Au Secours! Au Secours!

We sound the alarm for emergency assistance!

The threat of CODOFIL's elimination is now imminent. Another 12% budget cut is being proposed by the Governor for the beginning of March, and this may result in the Office's closure by the same date.

We are calling on you to help assure continued funding for CODOFIL by mounting a letter-writing campaign in your region of the state.

First, and foremost, you, as a French-speaking citizen of Louisiana, must make your views known regarding this proposed elimination of CODOFIL. The most effective way to accomplish this is to write personal letters to Governor Edwards and your area legislators.

Expand the effort by enlisting the help of your neighbors, including area teachers of French and their students, to write to Baton Rouge. It is important to maximize the number of letters received by the Governor and by state representatives and senators.

Feel free to include statements from the Resolution and letter to Governor Edwards and the Legislature.

Honorable Edwin Edwards, Governor
State Capitol
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004

Representative
State Capitol
P.O. Box 94281
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9281

Senator
State Capitol
P.O. Box 94183
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9183
RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, CODOFIL, Le Conseil pour le Développement du Français en Louisiane, was created in 1968 by Legislative Act 409; and

WHEREAS, CODOFIL does any and all things necessary to accomplish the development, utilization, and preservation of the French language for the cultural, economic and touristic benefit of the state; and

WHEREAS, CODOFIL cooperates with and advises other state agencies, including public institutions of education, regarding the development of French in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, CODOFIL is the voice of Louisiana to the French-speaking world, representing the State of Louisiana in educational and cultural negotiations, entering into agreements on its behalf and promoting its interests with the foreign governments of the French-speaking countries of the world; and

WHEREAS, CODOFIL is the voice of the French-speaking citizens of Louisiana, having championed the cause of Cajuns and Creoles in their efforts to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritages; and

WHEREAS, CODOFIL has created a French-as-a-Second-Language Program in the elementary schools of Louisiana which assures academic excellence for all children; and

WHEREAS, CODOFIL, to the great benefit of all Louisianans and to the economy of the State, has contributed to the growth and development of tourism by promoting Louisiana’s French-speaking cultures throughout the country and the world; and

WHEREAS, CODOFIL is a state agency governed by a board of fifty people from across the state, appointed by the governor, who give their time for no pay and no expense reimbursements; and

WHEREAS, CODOFIL has successfully fulfilled its legislative mandate;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana requests that the Honorable Governor Edwin Edwards and the Louisiana Legislature fund CODOFIL at a level which is adequate to allow CODOFIL to continue fulfilling its mandate for the benefit of all citizens of Louisiana.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I, Dr. John A. Bertrand, on behalf of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, hereunto declare this on the 1st day of February, 1993.

Dr. John A. Bertrand, Président
Le Conseil pour le développement du français en Louisiane

217 Rue Principale Ouest, Lafayette, Louisiane 70501
Tél.: (318) 262-5810, Gratuit: (800) 259-5810, FAX: (318) 262-5812
Dear Governor Edwards:

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of CODOFIL, we should look back on all that CODOFIL has accomplished and how Louisiana has changed in the last 25 years. CODOFIL came to be because James Domengeneaux became alarmed by the rapidly disappearing French language and culture in Louisiana and convinced the Louisiana legislature to do something about it. By 1968 French had already died out among the Creoles in New Orleans, both white and black, and the use of French was declining rapidly even in Acadiana.

When, in 1968, the legislature charged the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) with doing "any and all things necessary to accomplish the development, utilization and preservation of the French language for the cultural, economic and touristic benefit of the state and to cooperate with and advise other state agencies, including public institutions of education," the situation looked bleak.

French was taught in virtually no elementary schools and in a minority of high schools. Most students, even in the most francophone parishes, graduated without ever studying a minute of their ancestral language. Francophones were 99% illiterate in French since it was almost never taught. People were predicting that by the year 2000 the language would be dead.

Life Magazine published an article entitled, "A Waning Echo From the Cajun Country" which predicted our iniminent demise. Cajun and Zydeco music was almost completely confined to run-down bars. Even the most talented Cajun and Creole musicians spent their lives in neglect and poverty and many gave up the music altogether. Few radio stations devoted any time to Cajun or Zydeco music.

Almost no one would admit to being Cajun and few people outside of Louisiana had any idea what a Cajun was. The word Cajun was almost unknown in New Orleans where it was usually replaced with coonass or boogalee.

Louisiana had no French language poets, playwrights or authors and a limited production of French-language recorded music. Louisiana had almost no formal relations with other countries of the French-speaking world and did not participate in any international organizations of French-speaking countries. French-speaking tourists came to New Orleans to see jazz and left convinced that the French language was dead in this former French colony. Cajuns and Creoles in Acadiana spent their entire lives without ever meeting a French-speaking person from another country.

Although our Cajun cuisine was much appreciated at home, it was unknown outside of Louisiana. There were no Cajun restaurants outside of Louisiana and no industry of exporting Cajun spices, cookbooks and cooking shows.

In the normal course of events, the French language and culture would simply have disappeared completely in Louisiana.

But, from the beginning CODOFIL took its state mandate very seriously. It launched a massive public relations campaign to make our Cajun and Creole citizens realize that they should be proud of their bilingualism. Delegations from Louisiana visited with Presidents Pompidou and Mitterand of France. At the invitation of CODOFIL, President Giscard d’Estaing came to Lafayette. Intergovernmental relations with many foreign governments were established, particularly with France, Belgium, Quebec and New Brunswick and they sent us teachers by the thousands. Louisiana now participates in numerous francophone international organizations and is even an honored guest at the biannual summit of heads of state of francophone countries.

Today about 80,000 elementary school children study French in Louisiana in the CODOFIL program and many more study French in high schools. University French programs have expanded. In parishes in which virtually no one studied French in 1968, students routinely take French for five years of elementary school and two years of high school or more. We even have immersion programs where all subjects are taught in French.

In 1974 CODOFIL launched the first Tribute to Cajun Music in Lafayette. That program showed the popularity and potential of French-language music and evolved into the Festivals Acadias, one of Lafayette’s great tourist attractions. The annual Tribute to Cajun Music brought Cajun music out of the bars and gave it mass family appeal.

Today, Cajun and Creole music has developed a world-wide following and Cajun and Zydeco bands are constantly touring all over America and all over the world. There are literally hundreds of Louisiana bands, often with young musicians, performing principally in French. Cajun and Zydeco music is now found in fancy restaurants, in music halls, on national television shows, on the national Grammy awards, at the President’s inauguration, Carnegie Hall and at every type of festival in Louisiana and in many other states. Large quantities of Cajun and Zydeco music are being recorded and played by radio stations throughout the world. CODOFIL, through its international contacts, was also instrumental in the creation of the Festival International in Lafayette which is a major tourist attraction. A grass-roots Cajun French Music Association has sprung up with thousands of members. The popularity of Cajun music brings tourists to Louisiana, whether they speak French or not.
CODOFIL played a large part in creating an awareness of the need to retain our cultural heritage. The federal government has spent millions of dollars in Louisiana developing the national park Jean Lafitte which emphasizes Cajun and Creole heritage at its exhibits in New Orleans, Thibodaux, Lafayette and Eunice.

The word "Cajun" is known throughout the world. Every national chain of fast food restaurants has marketed products under the name of "Cajun" this or that. Cajun cooking has become world famous. A Cajun dictionary and a Cajun artist have made the cover of the Wall street Journal. We have Cajun theater, music and dance troupes. Cajun authors have published books in French in France and Canada and there are many local poets writing in French. French authors from France have written book after book about Louisiana which have been best sellers and have given millions of French readers the desire to come to Louisiana. Every French magazine and newspaper has had articles about Louisiana. Louisiana receives hundreds of thousands of French-speaking visitors every year due to the efforts of CODOFIL and they visit Cajun Country by the busload.

In New Orleans today, the words Cajun and Creole are everywhere. Now every restaurant wants to be a Cajun restaurant and everyone wants to be Cajun and Creole. New Orleans, which is a tourist-dependant city, realizes that these are magic words to attract visitors and conventions. New Orleans has enjoyed an expanding tourist industry in recent years and Cajun and Zydeco music has grown in popularity to the point where it rivals jazz as the city's main musical attraction.

People are proud to be Cajun and Creole. The change in attitude has been astounding. People feel better about themselves and their state.

CODOFIL is a state agency governed by a board of fifty people from across the state, appointed by the governor, who give their time for no pay and no expense reimbursements. CODOFIL has had incredible success in fulfilling the mandate that the legislature gave it. It is, therefore, ironic that the very existence of CODOFIL is put into cause year after year.

Is CODOFIL still needed? You bet it is!

The huge CODOFIL elementary school French program would not survive many years without CODOFIL to fight for its existence. Budget cuts would rapidly destroy a program which has taken 25 years to develop.

CODOFIL is the voice of Louisiana to the French-speaking world. Without CODOFIL the foreign governments would have no one to correspond with. CODOFIL is the only state agency which operates in French and may well be the only state agency which is even capable of reading or correctly writing a letter in French. CODOFIL is the issuing agency for the visas which bring hundreds of foreign teachers to Louisiana each year to teach French. CODOFIL participates yearly in negotiations between Louisiana and foreign governments which bring scholarships and other educational benefits to Louisiana citizens.

Yes, many of the programs which CODOFIL began have been picked up by other entities, such as the State Department of Education, LPB, KRVS, parish school boards, universities, private organizations, etc. This is absolutely necessary since CODOFIL has seen its budget drastically reduced by the legislature over the years. But CODOFIL still serves as the conscience of the French movement in Louisiana. CODOFIL is still the great champion and defender of the French language and Cajun and Creole culture. There is no other state agency or private organization which could fulfill the role of CODOFIL.

If CODOFIL is abolished, Louisiana will be turning its back on 300 years of history and on the forty countries of the French-speaking world. Louisiana will be saying to its Cajun and Creole citizens that this language and culture they have miraculously preserved through almost 200 years of American domination is valueless. The state may save a tiny sum of money now, but the loss to the cultural fabric of Louisiana will be immeasurable.

Sincerely,

John A. Bertrand
Président
Le Conseil pour le développement du français en Louisiane
Le Conseil pour le développement du français en Louisiane

1990 Census Fact: Population: 4,219,973

1990 Census Facts: 1,069,558 Louisianians, or 25% of the state's population who claim francophone ancestry.
- 550,440 French origin
- 432,549 Acadian origin
- 86,569 French-Canadian origin

80-81 LA Budget Fact: CODOFIL Budget: $1,254,358

92-93 LA Budget Fact: CODOFIL Budget: $181,200

93-94 LA Budget Fact: ZERO funding for CODOFIL

We, the French-speaking citizens of Louisiana, are a national living treasure, bringing in millions of tourist dollars with our hospitality, our cuisine, our music and our language. We are a non-renewable resource unless the State of Louisiana invests in the development of French! Les citoyens francophones de cet état ont le droit de réclamer une subvention adéquate pour Le CODOFIL!

Faites passer la nouvelle aux voisins, aux cousins, et aux amis!
Aidez Le CODOFIL à célébrer son 25ème anniversaire!

CODOFIL
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