State Rep. Stephen Ortego pulled a $1 bill from his pocket Thursday morning, prompting Lt. Gov. Jay Dardenne and several other politicians to open wallets and follow suit.

By the end of a news conference to discuss the $100,000 budget cut for the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, the group had collected $10—the humble beginning of an effort to privately raise enough money to offset CODOFIL's funding reduction dealt by Republican Gov. Bobby Jindal.

"We already have $10, so there's only $99,990 remaining," Ortego, D-Carencro, said.

Ortego and two of his peers, State Reps. Jack Montoucet, D-Crowley and Vincent Pierre, D-Lafayette, railed against Jindal's decision to strip $100,000 of CODOFIL's $257,000 annual allocation from the state's budget during a news conference this past week. On Thursday, Republican Lt. Gov. Jay Dardenne joined the three Democrats in criticizing Jindal's line-item veto.

"I can't provide you any reasons as to the veto's logic because I think it's illogical," Dardenne said at CODOFIL's office in downtown Lafayette. "This was not discussed with me, and I regret the fact that it's happened."

The cut will be particularly damaging to the Escadriulle Louisiane program, which seeks assistance from France in training Louisiana teachers to be better French teachers.

"Schools will continue having French Immersion programs, but this cut hinders CODOFIL's ability to provide the backup and to expand and continue French Immersion," Ortego said.

The politicians admitted CODOFIL likely won't have the $100,000 restored to the state's budget, as the politicians haven't been able to garner enough support for a veto session to override Jindal's decision. Montoucet, however, said he's spoken with Rep. Chuck Kleckley, R-Lake Charles, that the politicians said will hurt CODOFIL and weaken French Immersion programs in Louisiana.

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Charles, who is Jindal's handpicked Speaker of the House, about restoring the funds.

"He has committed to me to check into it and see why the cuts were made and how we can get that restored," Montoucet said of his conversation with Kleckley. "The Speaker of the House carries a big stick."

In vetoing the funding, Jindal wrote CODOFIL "has been adequately funded."

Dardenne said he will also work to secure state and federal grants that may provide CODOFIL with some funds, but Ortego said he expects grants to give the organization less than $25,000.

"With little hope of either finding $100,000 in grant money or restoring the funds through a veto-override session, the politicians and CODOFIL officials are left asking private donors, and emptying their own pockets, to give the organization the same amount of money it lost in the upcoming year's budget."

To help raise that $100,000, Mandy Migues, president of the French-speaking, young-professionals group FrancoJeunes, said her organization will launch at noon today a fundraising campaign called "100,000 Cajuns, Creoles and Friends of French in Louisiana."

The campaign asks people to donate at least $1 to CODOFIL and plays off a comment Montoucet made this past week when he said the cut is "only $100,000, and I know we have more than 100,000 Cajuns in this area of the state."

A link to submit donations will be posted on the campaign's Facebook page, which may be found at Facebook.com/100KLA.

Though Montoucet, Ortego and Pierre are the only members of the state's Acadiana Delegation to publicly criticize CODOFIL's budget cut, Ortego said other delegation members, including Republicans, are upset about Jindal's decision.

CODOFIL, created by the state's legislature in 1968, aims to "accomplish the development, utilization, and preservation of the French language as found in Louisiana for the cultural, economic and touristic benefit of the state," according to the organization's website.

"We'll overcome this unexpected bump in the road," Dardenne said. "This is not a political issue. This is something that's good for the economy and tourism in Louisiana. It simply makes sense to invest in Louisiana's status as a Francophone state."