Promoters of legislation to allow gambling on riverboats operating on Louisiana rivers said Wednesday that a study estimates riverboat gambling would be worth $289 million a year to the economy. The study done by LSU economics professor David Johnson estimates a total of 26,000 new jobs would be created.


Pat Fahey, president of the organization supporting the bills, noted that the economic projections are only estimates.

"However, Dr. Johnson's projections suggest that riverboat gaming could offer a new dimension to our state's tourist program and deliver essential economic and tax dollars to the people of Louisiana," Fahey said.

The study provides estimates of the financial impact where riverboat gambling activity is likely.
It estimates annual increases in household income for New Orleans of $225 million; Baton Rouge, $12 million; Shreveport, $25 million; Lake Charles, $22 million and a central-northeast Louisiana corridor, $5 million.

The income increases include not only the income from direct employment on the riverboats but also income from working for service companies and suppliers and from those whose incomes are increased because of goods and services purchased by those obtaining direct employment in the primary or secondary industries, said Johnson.

The employment data are similarly comprehensive, said Johnson.

The riverboats likely to be built must be driven by paddlewheels, carry at least 600 passengers and be a minimum of 150 feet in length.

The economist said potential riverboat operators in the New Orleans area have said they plan to invest $20 million to $30 million in each boat and that each will have an exterior and interior closely resembling a 19th Century riverboat.

The boats are expected to carry about 3,000 people and have a length of about 300 feet.

The boats will be open to everyone, but children under age 21 will not be allowed in the casinos.

“It is clearly apparent that the prime location for the riverboats is New Orleans, and there are plans for four large gambling riverboats to operate from the downtown riverfront,” Johnson said.

Plans in other parishes have not progressed as far as in New Orleans. Baton Rouge is very interested, he said, as a part of its riverfront development.

A riverboat with gambling could also be tied into trips to the river plantations, Johnson said.