Roemer keys banquet

By ALICE FERGUSON
Staff Writer

Gov.-elect Buddy Roemer has a plan for Louisiana's future, and part of it hinges on the success of CODOFIL — the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana.

That's what Roemer told CODOFIL supporters during his keynote address at the Foundation CODOFIL banquet Friday, a $110-per-couple fundraiser to help the organization overcome cuts in state funds.

Roemer said that while times are hard and the state can't spend as much on CODOFIL as it might like, he supports — and needs — the organization.

"About CODOFIL," he said, "I support it, in the past and in the future. I hope we can do a lot with CODOFIL toward tying this state together."

Teaching French in public schools, he said, is one way to do that.

"I must admit that I don't speak French, but I'm proud that my children do, that they study it in school."

Roemer said the state can no longer operate as a divided family.

Funds

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Its three main areas — which he defined as "North, South and New Orleans" — must come together, and a common appreciation of French language and culture can help them do it.

"To conquer our problems we must do it together. Like a family, you can't cut somebody out, slide them away from the table. If you do, you just don't feel right about it."

Roemer cited four specifics of his plan to make Louisiana "the Southern state of choice" for businesses.

First, he told CODOFIL supporters, he will clean up Louisiana's politics, to improve its reputation in business and financial circles.

Second, Roemer intends to educate Louisiana's children.

"We're gonna do what we have to do," he said, drawing long applause.

"We'll put the best teacher in each classroom and treat her like gold. I don't care what the unions say, I don't care what the organizations say, I don't care what the politicians say. I say we're going to find out who can teach, and we're going to pay them."

The third facet of Roemer's plan, he said, also involves CODOFIL.

"We're going to put together the best economic development package this state has ever had," he said. By using CODOFIL and its connections to other Francophone regions of the world, Louisiana can develop trade networks "on both sides of the water."

Finally, Roemer said, he plans to clean up the state's environment, "so Louisiana will be the place of preference" for businesses seeking to expand into Southern states.

Before introducing Roemer, CODOFIL's Dr. William Arceneaux expressed similar optimism for the organization's future.

Also, he said, nurturing Acadiana's French heritage is good business sense, since it strengthens the state's tourism industry.

Referring to a well-known tourist community, Arceneaux said, "There is only one Mamou, and we've got it. Tourists come here because we are different."

CODOFIL's founder and chairman of the organization since its inception, James Domengeaux, also attended the banquet and was honored with two standing ovations as those in attendance expressed appreciation for his continuing support of the organization.