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Gov. Jindal's administration accused of not being transparent enough

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BATON ROUGE, LA (WAFB) - The Louisiana Governor's Office still ranks last in the country when it comes to transparency, according to one university study. Some legislators say Governor Bobby Jindal even fought legislation this year that would have changed that status.

Webster's Dictionary defines *transparent* as being "free from deceit"... "readily understood"...and "accessibility of information." On the same day that veto ballots were being sent to legislators, some lawmakers say many of the cuts Jindal is making are far from improving public understanding.

"Good government is only good as long as it doesn't apply to the governor's office, and I think that's the wrong message to send," says state Representative Neil Abramson of New Orleans. Governor Jindal vetoed a bill by Representative Abramson that would have increased disclosure for the governor and all elected officials. The bill would have required elected officials to disclose any campaign contributor later appointed to a board or given a job. "We're publicly in favor of the legislation," Jindal said. "Everything was fine and they expressed no concerns with the bill at all, until the veto came down," says Abramson.

Jindal says he vetoed Abramson's bill only because of about four words that he called misleading and wrong. "When we talked to the author, he conceded there was an error once we pointed it out to him, and he offered to try and fix it in future legislation." Abramson says that's not true. "They picked up a few words out of one of the provisions and gave it that interpretation. I don't agree with it. I think it's a very strained interpretation." After five months of working hand-in-hand with the governor on this bill, Abramson says Jindal's veto doesn't make sense. "It raises the question whether they're concerned about releasing that information or not."

Abramson first proposed this bill months ago in Governor Jindal's ethics special session. He said Jindal was the reason it failed to pass back then. "There was a lot of back door politicking going on that the administration, from what I hear, opposed my bill and lobbied hard to kill it in committee, which apparently happened." However, in the regular session, Abramson says Jindal pledged to work with him on a compromise. Abramson says that didn't happen. "The governor has indicated in his veto message that he's behind transparency and behind the intent of the bill, so we'll see if we can get it passed again."

Governor Jindal appointed and hired several of his former campaign contributors once elected to office. Legislators have until midnight on Monday, July 28th to return veto ballots. There will only be a veto session if a majority of both the members of the House and Senate vote to have one.



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