

Mutual Admiration Society

By SUE LINCOLN

NOV 10, 2017



Photo: Sue Lincoln

Gov. John Bel Edwards has had his fair share of public tiffs — most notably with the House leadership and Attorney General Jeff Landry. But when he addressed the annual assembly of **Together Louisiana** on Thursday, it had all the earmarks of a love fest.

“My No. 1 priority is to invest in people. **Together Louisiana** has been a partner in that,” said Edwards

The gathering of faith and community leaders gave Edwards several standing ovations, as he listed some of the successes of what he deemed their “partnership.”

“You and I can agree that the very best social program in the world is a job. And the very best long-term, anti-poverty program is a career,” he told the group that espouses a progressive agenda. “That’s exactly why we did the Medicaid expansion: because guess what? If you can’t get out of bed, you’re not gonna go to work.”

After the governor concluded his address, members then asked him for commitments on several of the issues they advocate, including continued support in making tax incentive programs more transparent.

“Yes,” was Edwards' smiling response, evoking another round of applause and cheers.

He asked for their help — with solving the looming fiscal cliff.

“One billion dollars of revenue will fall off the books on June 30 of next year,” he reminded the diverse crowd gathered in the sanctuary of University Baptist Church in Baton Rouge.

“The state of Louisiana doesn’t need to net new revenue,” he said. “We need to replace the revenue that is falling off the books, and so I’m going to ask Together Louisiana’s help. I’m going to ask each of you to engage with your state representative and state senator, and make sure they know how important it is that we continue to invest in our people. And if they insist on saying no to everything, make them tell you with specificity the cuts that they propose.”

He had another request, as well: “I’m going to ask **Together Louisiana** to be that beacon where we show people the strength in diversity, but also the strength in having a political discourse where we actually listen, in addition to talk.”

To which the gathering gave a resounding “yes.”