Levee board proposal aims to add members from eastern region
By JEREMY ALFORD
Courier Capitol Correspondent

BATON ROUGE -- The North Lafourche Conservation, Levee and Drainage District will never look the same again.

That’s because its board membership is on a swift track to being altered. A House panel approved the new changes Tuesday, and the proposal is expected to sail through the rest of the process without a hitch.

Senate Bill 89 by Sen. Reggie Dupre, D-Bourg, brings in new members to the board from an area that currently isn’t represented.

The House Transportation Committee unanimously approved the proposal, sending it to the full House for further debate.

The change is needed because the Legislature approved another bill in February that allowed Lafourche Parish’s three levee boards to withdraw from the Lafourche Basin Levee District, a six-parish hub responsible for 62 miles of levees along the west bank of the Mississippi River.

Everything north of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway was merged into the North Lafourche Conservation, Levee and Drainage District, which had presided over only the area west of Bayou Lafourche.

The district was overseeing everything on the eastern bank, but it has lost control of the region, and it will officially go to the North Lafourche board on Jan. 1.

The South Lafourche Levee District remains unchanged.

As a result of these alterations Dupre filed his bill to bring in new members to the northern board from the eastern bank of the bayou.

"We need to assure we have geographic representation in that new area," Dupre said following Tuesday’s hearing. "We also need to make sure everyone is represented."

Presently, there are nine members on the North Lafourche Conservation, Levee and Drainage District.

Dupre’s bill originally called for four members to be appointed from each side of Bayou Lafourche and the remaining member to be selected from the district at-large.

Since the population numbers fluctuate between these boundaries, Rep. Loulan Pitre, R-
Cut Off, attached an amendment to the bill changing the breakdown to three members from each side of Bayou Lafourche and three more from the district at-large.

"This still satisfies the intentions of my bill," Dupre said.

Nominations come from various sources, then the governor makes the appointments and the Senate ratifies the decisions.

The legislation calls for the nominations as follows:

Six members selected from lists offered by the six state legislators who represent Lafourche Parish.

One member selected from a list of nominees compiled by Lafourche Parish government.

One member selected from a list of nominees compiled by Thibodaux city government.

One member selected from a list of nominees compiled by the Lockport town government.

The changes would go into effect Jan. 1, 2008, if approved by the Legislature and signed by the governor.