Water Institute, a Baton Rouge-based research and policy group, shows that while coastal restoration reduces the risk of flood-

icy issuers, and Moffatt & Nichol, a Baton Rouge engineering firm.

The Graveline Bay marsh restoration project rebuilt

investigator on the report. Her work focuses on navigating federal, state and local governments to help Gulf Coast communities

is that they reduce flood risk," she said. "This is us working to help find sustainable ways to connect risk mitigation to risk pricing."



A partially flooded road in Venice, Louisiana. A new report looks at how coastal restoration can be connected to lower flood insurance rates and risk.

Photo by Elise Plunk/Louisiana Illuminator

A "consistent" decrease in wave heights after the Graveline Bay marsh was rebuilt translated to a lower risk of flooding for nearby homes and businesses, with the reduction ranging from nine percent to 18 percent, the report found. But while the flood risk decreased, insurance prices didn't always reflect the reduction.

The federal-government backed National Flood Insurance Program is often the only option on the market for home and business coverage in flood-prone areas. The Federal Emergency Management Agency uses the program's disaster risk rating system to set insurance rates for policy holders.

Its latest version, known as Risk Rating 2.0, has been widely criticized as not fully reflecting efforts local governments and communities have taken to reduce flood vulnerability, such as home elevation, roof upgrades and coastal restoration projects.

Collini said the Dauphin Island project is a "first step" in connecting coastal restoration work to consistently lower insurance prices.

"(We're) trying to move forward in a way where we don't ignore that things are risky, but we are also not ignoring when we do work to make it less risky," she said.

Collini said the Water Institute is "actively working with partners in Louisiana" to choose areas in state where a similar project can help local communities better understand how nearby coastal restoration has reduced flood risk – and if it can be carried over to decreased insurance prices.

"For Alabama, 60 acres is a big restoration, but that's not a big restoration in Louisiana," she said. "There are much bigger projects, and so it's exciting to think about the kind of impact they could be having."◊

Louisiana Parole Project is matching state's expanding infrastructure with second chances, national funding

By Izzy Wollfarth
Contributing Writer

New industry giants like SpaceX, the new Hyundai steel production base, and Meta are expanding career opportunities across parishes in Louisiana.

Dr. Loren C. Scott, president of Loren C. Scott & Associates, a Louisiana-based economic consulting firm, forecast a 3.7-percent increase in job opportunities, equating to an additional 74,500 jobs over the course of 2026 to 2027.

Amidst an ever-expanding job market, the Louisiana Parole Project, a nonprofit dedicated to reentry services and mentorship, doesn't want the formerly incarcerated to get left behind.

Second Chance Pathways, a two-year program that will prepare incarcerated individuals for new market demands, is set to begin at the start of the new year, and will be overseen by both the Parole Project and the Louisiana Department of Corrections.

The aim of the program is to develop career plans for 200 incarcerated individuals, who will soon leave prison, through career screening tools, skilled labor training and additional post-release assistance like housing and transportation.

"We view Second Chance Pathways as a hand up, not a handout; a way to stabilize people so they can retain these jobs," says Andrew Hundley, executive director at the Parole Project.

The program was recently awarded over $995,000 through the BlackRock Future Builders grant, an initiative under the financial investment fiduciary, The BlackRock Foundation, aimed at addressing disparities in the skilled labor workforce and investing in long-term careers.

John Kelly, senior managing director at BlackRock, says that Second Chance Pathways was one of 15 projects selected nationwide.

"What stood out with the Parole Project is a track record of young people, formerly incarcerated, who are going through the pathway and ending up finding actual careers, real jobs, actual placements, and the endorsement of the community around them," Kelly explains.

Logan Perron, 34, who served two years in the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola for drug offense charges, is an example of the types of candidates the program aims to reach.

While incarcerated at Angola, Perron participated in the Re-Entry Court also known as the Offender Rehabilitation and Workforce Development Program, where he earned multiple electrical work certifications aligning with NCCER curricula and standards, including engine repair, power industry fundamentals and hands-on commercial and industry experience.

Now out of prison, Perron is eager to apply what he's learned.

"I am a very, very hard worker, a very fast learner and a leader," says Perron, "All I need is a chance and opportunity to show what I'm capable of."

Hundley says that second chances for the formerly incarcerated is a growing trend across Louisiana business and organizations, including in the Louisiana Department of Corrections.

"The Department of Corrections has gotten more forward thinking in providing people opportunities to learn new trades," says Hundley. "There was a time where the prison system's job was to keep you in prison and then when your time was done, they're also done with you, but the mindset's changed."

The Corrections Department currently operates five regional reentry programs and three Short-Term Enhanced Programming facilities that prepare people in prison to eventually reenter society and reduce their chances of returning to prison.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce found that 24 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals are unlikely to recommit crimes if they acquire new skills and hold jobs while in prison.

The data also finds that those who maintain employment after prison are at a lower risk of recidivism compared to those unable to retain a job and are thus at an increased risk of being reincarcerated.

Although Second Chance Pathways is a 24-month program, Hundley says focused career efforts for the

Logan Perron, 34, after leaving prison and returning home to Baton Rouge.

Photo courtesy
The Louisiana Parole Project

formerly incarcerated will not cease.

"Louisiana has significant demands for highly skilled workers right now in light of all the infrastructure projects and there's no reason to believe that Meta, SpaceX and the Hyundai steel plant are going to be the last of them," he says. ◊

Trump auto-enrolls 10s of millions in child investment accounts

By Ashley Murray
Contributing Writer

(States Newsroom) – Every child in the United States with a valid Social Security number is now enrolled in a tax-advantaged investment account, titled a "Trump Account," President Donald Trump announced on October 7.

Parents must claim the accounts by downloading a Trump Account mobile app. Children born from 2025 through 2028 will automatically receive a one-time deposit of $1,000 from the U.S. government, once parents or guardians officially claim it.

Children born before the eligibility window, up to age 10, can receive a $250 deposit donated by the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, of Dell Technologies fortune.

Surrounded in the Oval Office by U.S. Treasury Department officials, business moguls and a half dozen children holding a banner reading, "Thank You for Trump Accounts," the president said parents and guardians have voluntarily created accounts for 8 million children since the July 4 launch.

"With today's announcement, we're building on that success by 70 million accounts of children across America," Trump said. "Put very simply, this money is your child's future."

The White House estimates over 60 million accounts have been added via auto-enrollment, but did not provide a specific figure.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the accounts mark the "beginning of the ownership society."

Investments from government, philanthropy

More than $4.5 billion has been deposited into the accounts since July 4, according to the White House.

According to Trump "much of that" has come from large donors, including the Dells, and Altimeter tech investment firm founder Brad Gerstner, who attended the announcement.

Parents and guardians have claimed roughly $2.6 billion in philanthropic contributions to date, with more available, according to the White House. The U.S.

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PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

New Orleans Rail Gateway Program
Jefferson and Orleans Parishes
State Project No. H.005168.2
Avondale Rail Crossing Grade Separation Study

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, and the railroads operating in the New Orleans metropolitan area, will host an open house public scoping meeting for the Avondale Rail Crossing Grade Separation Study. Based on the findings of a 2025 Planning and Environmental Linkages Study, three build alternatives were recommended for further study: one alternative for the Avondale Garden Road at-grade crossing and two alternatives for the Willswood Lane at-grade crossing. The Live Oak Boulevard at-grade crossing is no longer being considered. The project is advancing to the next environmental phase of study. No decision has been made on which, if any, alternative will be constructed. The open house public scoping meeting will be held:

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2026
6:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.

J.C. Simmons Community Center
4008 U.S. Highway 90, Westwego, LA 70094

The meeting will consist of a repeating recorded presentation of the alternatives under consideration, exhibits for viewing, and the opportunity to speak with Study Team representatives, provide comments, and be added to the study distribution list to receive future notices. All interested parties are encouraged to attend.

Comment forms will be available at the meeting and on the DOTD website at **dotd.la.gov**. Search for **"Avondale Rail Crossing Grade Separation Study Documents"** under the **New Orleans Rail Gateway Program**, then click the **Comment Form** link. After downloading the form, it may be either mailed to the address shown on the form or submitted via email to NORG@mbakerintl.com. Emailed forms should indicate **"NORG Avondale Rail Crossing Grade Separation Study Comment Form"** as the subject. Comments must be received at the meeting, or postmarked/emailed no later than **November 10, 2026**, to be included in the public record.

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. If special accommodations are needed to participate in the meeting (e.g., sign language interpretation), please call 504-488-6196 at least five business days in advance of the meeting.

For more information, contact 504-488-6196 or visit **dotd.la.gov** and search for **"Avondale Rail Crossing Grade Separation Study Documents"**.

DOTD
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT