

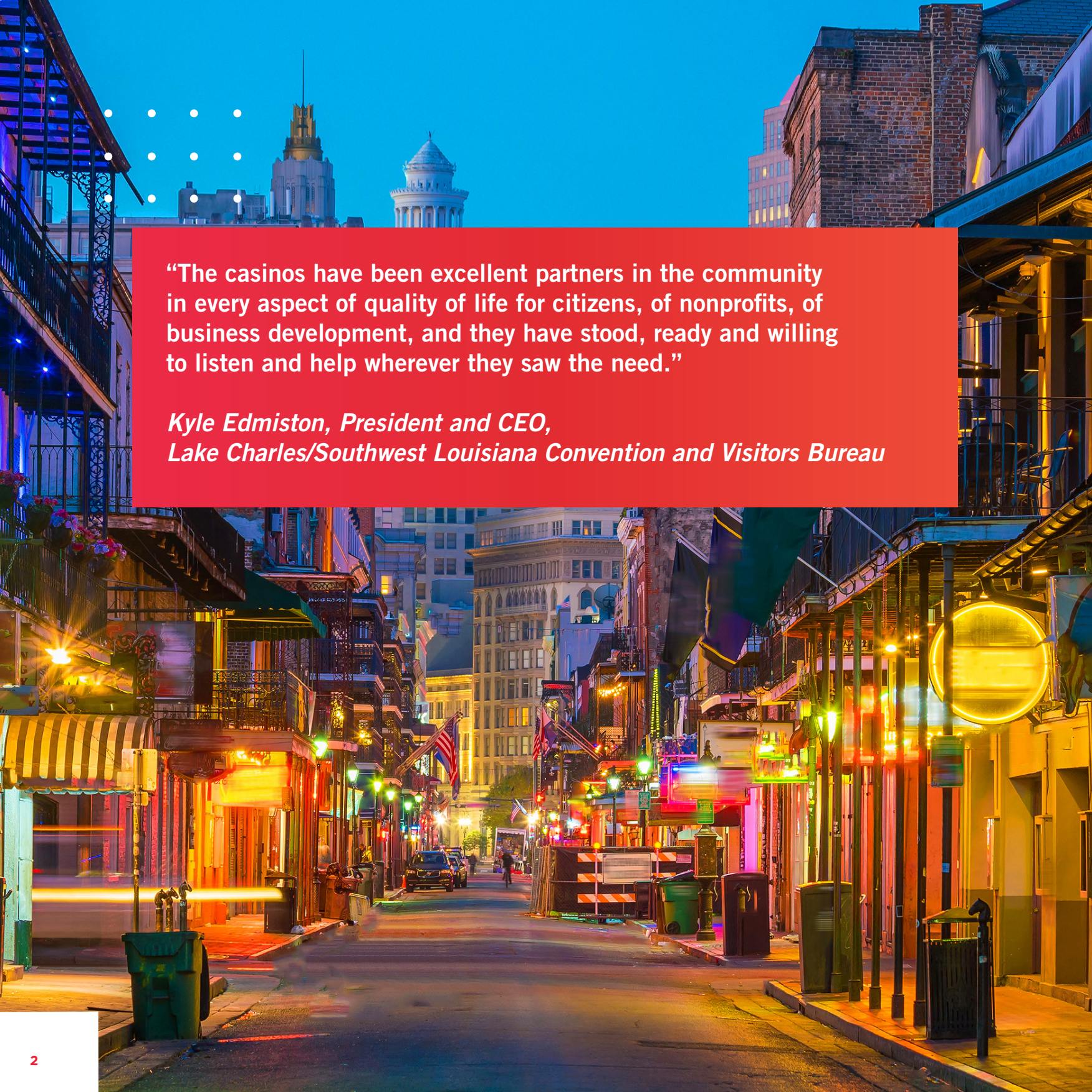
# Casinos & Communities Louisiana



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**“The casinos have been excellent partners in the community in every aspect of quality of life for citizens, of nonprofits, of business development, and they have stood, ready and willing to listen and help wherever they saw the need.”**

*Kyle Edmiston, President and CEO,  
Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau*

## Gaming in Louisiana by the Numbers

25

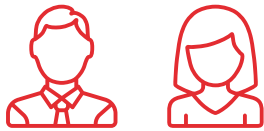
commercial and  
tribal casinos

\$1.5B

generated in taxes

\$6.1B

in total economic impact



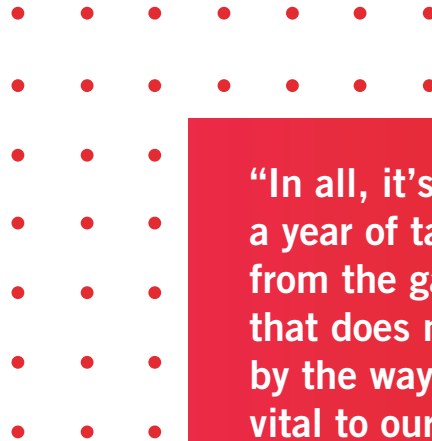
40,919

jobs supported



\$1.7B

in supported wages



“In all, it’s about a billion dollars a year of taxes that’s coming from the gaming industry, and that does not include sales tax, by the way. That money is just vital to our state budget.”

*Ronnie Johns,  
Louisiana State Senator*

# Three Decades of Gaming in Louisiana

1991

Louisiana becomes the fourth state to approve riverboat gaming, authorizing a maximum 15 riverboat casinos

1992

The state concludes gaming compacts with the Tunica-Biloxi and Coushatta tribes; a compact with the Chitimachas is signed in 1993

1993-  
1994

The first riverboat casinos start operating in **Baton Rouge, Lake Charles, New Orleans, and Shreveport-Bossier City**

1999

Louisiana's **first land-based commercial casino opens** in downtown New Orleans

2002

Slot machines are installed at the state's first racino in Vinton

2018

Louisiana updates its gaming laws, **allowing riverboat casinos to move to new land-based facilities**

Louisiana law originally required most riverboat casinos to sail while gambling took place. A 2001 rule change allowed the boats to remain dockside, though the casino floor had to be over water and the boats were required to keep mariners on staff along with an operating paddle wheel. In 2018, casinos were authorized to move up to 1,200 feet inland from their current location.

# Expanding the Louisiana Economy

The emergence of the Louisiana casino industry in the 1990s brought added entertainment options and boosted the Bayou State's economy. Today, Lake Charles and New Orleans rank among the top 20 commercial gaming markets in the country, with world-class casino resort destinations that attract visitors from all over the United States and beyond, to the benefit of small businesses, nonprofits, and Louisianians across the state.

Historically, Louisiana's economy has been susceptible to the ebbs and flows in global energy demand, but the casino industry has had a stabilizing effect on the state's balance sheet. "As the price of oil overseas went down, the economy in Louisiana followed it," explained Kyle Edmiston, president and CEO of the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau. "When you look around Lake Charles, you can see where the city and the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury have been able to take that revenue stabilization, plan out, bond out, and really do some significant projects that they could not have done otherwise, if they were depending on that up and down cash flow from the oil and gas industry," said Edmiston.

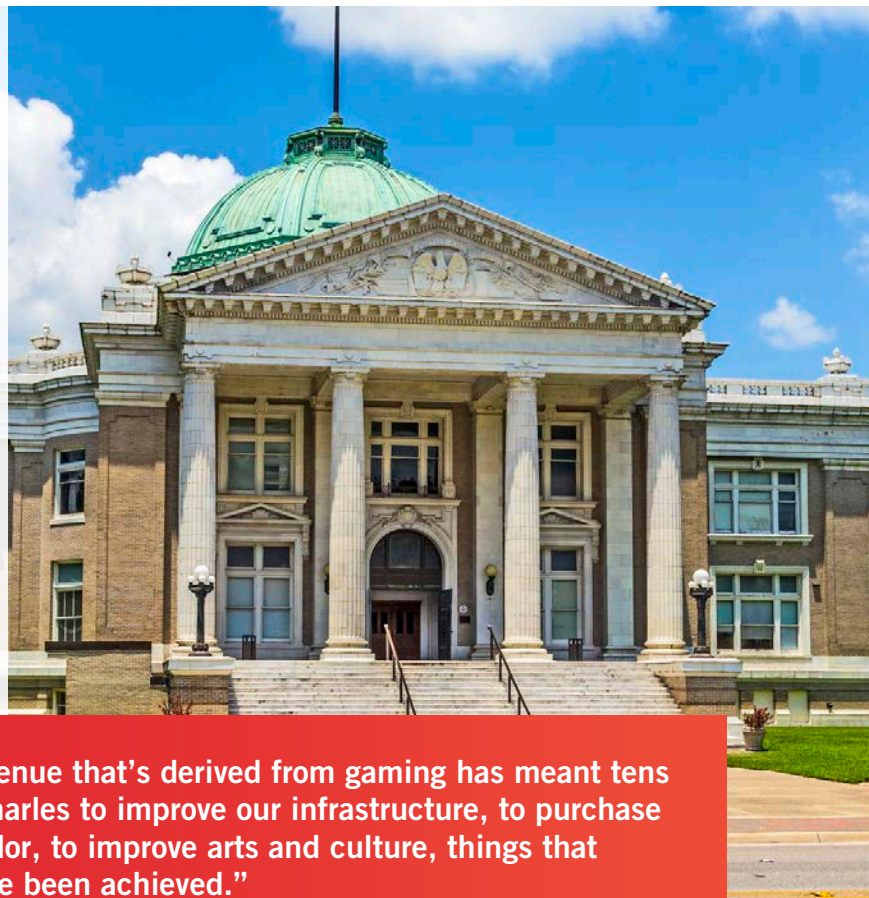
The steady stream of revenue that strong gaming markets generate helps Louisiana maintain one of the lowest tax rates in America. "A big part of that is gaming taxes coming in to pick up the slack where we're not putting that burden on the backs of taxpayers," according to State Senator Ronnie Johns. Every year, the casino industry supports nearly \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes.

What's more, Louisiana's casinos are major sources of employment. As George Swift, president and CEO of the Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance, put it, "casinos are like a city," providing "all kinds of job opportunities." Penn National Gaming's L'Auberge Casino Resort employs 2,400 workers in Lake Charles, second only to the Calcasieu Parish School System. Meanwhile, Caesars Entertainment employs a similar number of workers at Harrah's New Orleans Hotel & Casino and, statewide, casinos support nearly 41,000 jobs.

In small towns like Vinton, just west of Lake Charles, gaming's impact on employment can be huge. After a long period of decline, Boyd

Gaming's Delta Downs Racetrack Casino Hotel added slot machines in 2002 that "literally saved the racetrack," according to State Senator Johns, who at the time represented Vinton in the Louisiana House of Representatives. "The economic impact of a track is pretty big and for that little community, it's huge. You pick up 50 jobs in a town like Vinton, Louisiana...That's like picking up 500 jobs over here [in Lake Charles]," State Senator Johns added.

The influx of hospitality jobs helps cater to the ever-growing number of tourists that casino gaming attracts from inside and outside the state, with visitors spending a record \$18.8 billion across Louisiana in 2018. With casinos being the single largest draw of visitors to southwest Louisiana, according to Kyle Edmiston, he noted that those who downplay the local importance of the casino industry "don't understand the impact that 10 million visitors have."



"The gaming revenue and the ancillary revenue that's derived from gaming has meant tens of millions of dollars to the City of Lake Charles to improve our infrastructure, to purchase fire trucks, to improve our downtown corridor, to improve arts and culture, things that otherwise would not have been able to have been achieved."

*Nic Hunter, Mayor of Lake Charles, Louisiana*

# Growing Local Business, Improving Quality of Life

The gaming industry's ripple effects extend well beyond the casino floor, into the surrounding community. New Orleans business owner Scott Burke of Loop Linen experienced this firsthand. Founded in 1929, the family company started servicing Boyd Gaming's Treasure Chest Casino and Penn National Gaming's Boomtown Casino & Hotel New Orleans soon after gaming's introduction. In subsequent years, Loop Linen grew from 40 employees to 125 today and expanded its casino client footprint to Baton Rouge and across the border into Mississippi.

Christy Dirks, the president of Limousine Livery, also sees casinos as a vital asset to local businesses. "Caesars [Harrah's New Orleans] has given the stability that's allowed us to have full-time employees. I know if I perform well, they're going to have my back. That's very impactful." Dirks shared that without the casino, she's not sure she would have been able to keep the company's doors open and provide jobs with benefits to 130 people.

Gaming fuels revenue gains for more than casino suppliers and contractors. Edmiston explained that when visitors come to the Lake Charles area to gamble, they "end up spreading their money around the retail sector, the restaurant sector, convenience stores, gas stations" and other businesses located near a casino property. This kind of spending has "revitalized" the town, said State Senator Johns, who has seen retail, food, and entertainment "all just kind of explode here in this community." It's a quality of life factor that benefits everyone.

The gaming ripple effect reaches local education as well. Sowela Community College, one of the fastest-growing community colleges in Louisiana, recently broke ground on a new \$10 million facility dedicated to hospitality, gaming, and culinary training. Once completed, it will strengthen the area's educational offerings and prepare the next generation of leaders for a workforce that's seeing higher salaries and better benefits as a direct result of the standard set by casinos.

"The [benefits] package that the four properties offer is quite extensive and has made life much better. From medical, vacation, and a pure benefit standpoint, they have raised the bar, and other businesses have had to come along and raise their benefits package in order to keep and maintain that same level of workforce," said Edmiston.



“Casinos provided business for us and when we have business, we have jobs and revenue. And it’s a trickle effect. So now we have an extra route guy, we have an extra truck, and it means we have to hire more folks in the plant.”

*Scott Burke, President & Owner, Loop Linen*

# Aiding Communities in Times of Need

The Louisiana gaming industry understands their role in the community, especially in times of need following the destruction left by natural disasters. L'Auberge Casino Resort Lake Charles served as the command center during Hurricane Rita in 2005, while Harrah's New Orleans filled a similar role during Hurricane Katrina that same year. Across the Mississippi River from New Orleans, Gretna Mayor Belinda Constant remembers Boomtown Casino New Orleans offering food and working with contractors who helped to re-establish housing, "We were all just kind of surviving, and they were with us, helping the community."

Once the waters had receded, the long-term recovery began. "It would be very easy to fold and cave with trauma like that," recalls New Orleans Councilmember Jay H. Banks, "but we had a lot of people in a lot of different venues that said, 'we need to do what we need to do to get this city back up and running,' and Harrah's was there." Dirks echoes that sentiment. "I'm not saying Harrah's rebuilt New Orleans, but it was like that little beacon of light when a lot of businesses were kind of like, I don't know if it's possible." As one of the largest employers and buyers of services and goods, Harrah's New Orleans was able to help businessowners, like Dirks, bring back jobs and support employees returning to their homes. "It cannot be overstated," said Dirks, "the importance of Harrah's buying in those early days after Katrina for the survival of our company."

It's a common theme in Louisiana—casinos' connections with the community, giving back, and helping wherever and whenever needed. Family & Youth Counseling Agency, which provides affordable and professional family services to people in southwest Louisiana, works with several of the area casinos. "All of those folks...they seem to want to do the right thing for the community," said Executive Director Julio Galan. One recent donation from Delta Downs Racetrack Casino Hotel will enable Galan's organization to serve hundreds more children a year in a new, bigger facility for youth development focused on leadership development initiatives, career exploration programming, and civic engagement programming.

"The gaming industry understands what the community needs...And so those relationships help us build a better community overall."

*Julio Galan, Executive Director,  
Family & Youth Counseling Agency*

South of New Orleans, Jennifer Steel-Bourgeois from the Rotary Club of Westwego expressed similar gratitude and described her work with casinos as a partnership. Through a sponsorship from Boomtown Casino & Hotel New Orleans, the Rotary Club hosts an annual Cancer Survivor's Day for 200 participants in Boomtown's ballroom where they can build a network of support. "The casino has provided the food and support, the beverages, and each year that's about a \$10,000 value," said Steel-Bourgeois. "Quite frankly, I've never had them tell me no."

Employees with Harrah's New Orleans contribute 40,000 volunteer hours to their community each year. Nationwide, casino industry employees each average 14 hours of volunteer service a year, significantly outpacing other industries.





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