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Scalise loses bid to lead House GOP



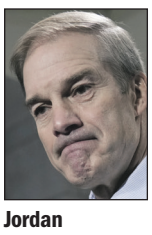
ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO BY JACQUELYN MARTIN

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-Jefferson, talks with reporters after a House GOP leadership candidate forum and before elections for the 120th Congress on Tuesday.

Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan elected minority leader

BY MARK BALLARD
Staff writer

WASHINGTON – House Majority Leader Steve Scalise lost his bid to lead Republicans when they assume the minority next year, ending a historic three-year period when the two top leaders in the lower chamber were both from Louisiana.



Jordan

House Judiciary Committee Chair Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, will become House minority leader after winning a secret 106-73 vote. He will be the highest-ranking Republican official come Jan. 3, when the 120th Congress takes office.

Scalise, R-Jefferson, is now set to return to the rank and file in the next Congress.

"I look forward to supporting my colleagues and continuing to fight for the American people."

REP. STEVE SCALISE,
in a post on X

"I look forward to supporting my colleagues and continuing to fight for the American people," Scalise wrote on X Tuesday evening, congratulating the new leadership.

Senate Republicans, who also lost the majority in last week's midterm elections, were more forgiving of their leadership. GOP senators reelected Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., as their chief.

Scalise's fellow LSU alum, Speaker Mike Johnson, R-Benton, bowed out of leadership for the next Congress after voters repudiated President Donald Trump and Republican governing priorities in the elections last week. Johnson has led the House since October 2023, with Scalise as his top lieutenant — it is the first time in history the institution's two top leaders are from the same state.

Johnson refused to say who he voted for but noted that Jordan had been a mentor when he arrived in 2017. He also rejected the notion that a majority of House Republicans were angered at the election results. Democrats went from 214 House seats — 218 are needed to win the majority — to at least 256 seats in the next Congress with a couple

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BREC plans nongolf activities at City Park

Course to close early to golfers on Sundays as part of pilot program

BY CLAIRE GRUNEWALD
Staff writer

City Park Golf Course will soon be closing early on Sundays and opening up to nongolfers under a new pilot program — just a few months after the golf course was the subject of an ongoing debate in Baton Rouge.

BREC plans to start a pilot program on Sundays from Nov. 29 to Feb. 28 where it will close the course to golfers by 1 p.m. and open up the course for nongolf uses for the rest of the day, according to a golf document outlining the plan.

A BREC spokesperson said details of the plan will be released soon.

The move comes after the master plan for City-Brooks Community Park was finalized in September. Throughout the process, public comment had largely focused on the future of the golf course. After months of back-and-forth, the final master plan suggests leaving par for the course the same, but shrinking its length by about 200 yards.

The idea to leverage golf course space for other activities — without making physical changes to the course — has been bounced around by officials for the past few months, though.

BREC Commissioner Wade Evans, who also

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STAFF FILE PHOTO BY MICHAEL JOHNSON

Golfers play a round at the Historic City Park Golf Course in October.

LSU names new construction school for businessman Favre

Art Favre, founder and owner of Performance Contractors Inc., speaks during Tuesday's announcement of the Art Favre School of Construction.

STAFF PHOTO BY PEARL SPURLOCK



BY HALEY MILLER
Staff writer

LSU is poised to transform its School of Construction with a major endowment and a state-of-the art new building, thanks to massive donations from an LSU alum and Louisiana construction tycoon, the school announced Tuesday.

"Construction is no longer a low-tech industry," Vicki Colvin, dean of the College of Engineering, said Tuesday. "It's going to become a high-tech industry, and it's going to do it right here in Louisiana."

The university will name its School of Construction, as well as the planned $107 million Construction and Advanced Manufacturing Building, for Art Favre and his industrial services company, Performance Contractors.

The LSU Foundation announced the new names Tuesday during a celebration event for Favre at the foundation building on Nicholson Drive. The foundation did not disclose the dollar amount of Favre's donation but said the donor has put tens of millions toward the university's construction expansion, including a previous $15 million

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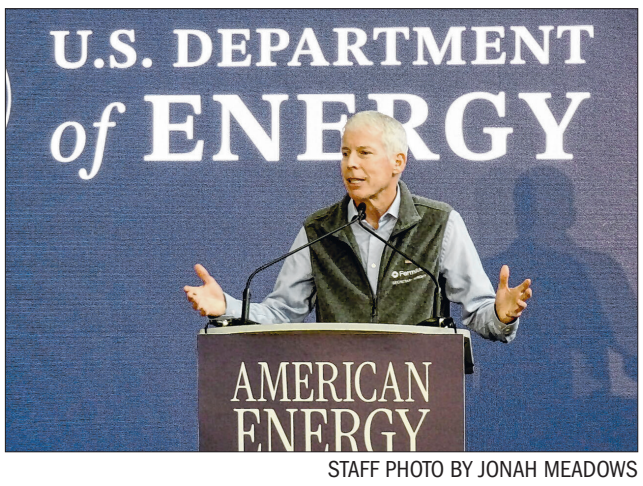
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Shallow water drilling off La. coast gets boost

Energy Dept. loans $480M to Texas firm

BY JONAH MEADOWS
Staff writer



STAFF PHOTO BY JONAH MEADOWS

U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright announces the Energy Department's first loan to an oil and gas producer through the Energy Dominance Financing Program, a $480 million loan to Texas-based Arena Energy, at an event Tuesday in Luling.

The Trump administration is investing nearly $500 million in a new program to modernize offshore drilling platforms and old pipelines in the shallow waters of the Gulf off the coast of Louisiana, a move the administration says will stimulate domestic oil and gas production and create new jobs.

At an event in Luling on Tuesday, U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright announced that the Department of Energy has loaned $480 million to Texas-based Arena Energy, an offshore oil and gas producer, to modernize 22 platforms, build or refurbish 450 miles of pipelines and allow Arena to operate a second drilling rig.

The loan will cover 80% of Project Elkhorn, as the initiative is called. Once completed, it is expected to more than double the company's rate of oil production and significantly increase its natural gas production in an area called Southern Eugene Island about 170 miles southwest of New Orleans.

"This is an area of the shelf that we call the tenderloin," Arena Energy CEO Mike Minarovic said. "It has the best prospects, the best opportunities to continue the shelf for as long as possible."

Wright along with other federal and state officials joined staff of Arena and its affiliated companies, White Fleet Drilling and Rosefield Pipeline, at the announcement of the new infrastructure project. Company officials said it would bring 2,400 construction jobs and 400 permanent operations roles to the Gulf, where Arena already has nearly 400 contractors.

The project signals a return to shallow water drilling in the coast, once the mainstay of the state's energy industry. Over the past two decades, many major oil companies sold off their shallow-water Gulf platforms, as fields became depleted, and moved into deeper water, which offered far greater returns on their investment.

In the years since, they have sold their assets to newer, smaller companies like Arena, which was founded in 1999 and bought its Eugene Island assets from Chevron in 2016. Since then, it has drilled 26 wells in depths of 110 to 180 feet.

Greg Upton, executive director of LSU Energy Institute, said higher oil prices and new technology make drilling in mature fields on the continental shelf more profitable and efficient, especially in places where production can come online relatively quickly.

"Investment in the Gulf has increasingly shifted toward deepwater projects, which tend to favor larger companies with the capital to undertake major developments," Upton said. "This investment focuses instead on extending the productive life of existing shelf infrastructure."

Wright said the project was only possible with government assistance, pointing to a lack of private financing for offshore drilling in shallower waters of the continental shelf, despite plenty of available capital for on-shore and deepwater projects.

"This is a loan that leads to development that otherwise would not happen or would happen at a much slower pace," Wright said. "It's like if you had to build a home without a mortgage, you would build your home very slowly."

It's the first time an oil or gas company has been the recipient of a loan from the Office of Energy Dominance Financing, which was known as the Office of Loan Financing when it was created two decades earlier.

Last year, the Trump administration rebranded the program after Congress eliminated a requirement for its loans to support energy infrastructure projects like wind and solar that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"President Trump got elected to reverse policies that were making it harder to do that in our country, standing in the way of energy production and celebrating the closure of coal plants or large manufacturing facilities, pushing industry outside of our country," Wright said. "That just makes no sense."

Wright said his department isn't feeling any time pressure to get the money out the door before shifts in the political climate.

The loan, he said, will "quite easily" get paid back from the cash flow of the new wells as they are developed, plus the federal government will get an estimated $1.5 billion in additional royalties.

Minarovic said his company will put up about $120 million as part of Project Elkhorn over the next five years, with another $2.5 billion of private investment to pay for the drilling.

"A simple way to look at this is that the landowner — the federal government in this case — owns a significant royalty interest, and the landowner wants to encourage development by offering an infrastructure loan to the company that is willing to develop that acreage and commit to significant drilling capital," Minarovic said.

Banks are not interested in investing in these aging oil and gas assets, Minarovic said. Arena has already spent about $30 million on some of the decaying platforms to bring them back online after they were shuttered by their previous operator.

"So we stepped into their shoes and purchased those properties, usually for abandonment obligations, because they had a significant abandonment obligation," he said. "Then we had to invest in the infrastructure to get these things up and running again, because there was corrosion and there were a lot of issues."

Dustin Davidson, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Conservation and Energy, said the project will also preserve opportunities for recreational fishing, with Arena committing to the "rigs to reefs" program to preserve the marine habitats that have developed on platforms over decades.

"Arena has taken steps to make sure that that habitat stays in place and also worked very hard to ensure that the federal government recognizes that habitat just as much as we do here in Louisiana," Davidson said.

Davidson suggested Project Elkhorn would also help pay for the state's coastal restoration efforts.

But because Gulf Coast states' share of federal offshore oil and gas royalties awarded under the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act reaches its maximum amount every year, more drilling revenue is not expected to translate to more revenue for the state, according to Upton.

"We project that eligible revenues will continue to reach the cap for the foreseeable future," he said. "As long as the cap remains binding, additional federal royalties will not translate into larger GOMESA payments to Louisiana or its coastal parishes."

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BREC

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chairs the agency's Golf Committee, originally presented the plan to the committee in September in an attempt to "marry all sides together."

Evans said the goal is not to impede golfers but to adjust some tee times to open up the park to more people and include additional uses.

"It's a way to utilize square footage," Evans told BREC commissioners. "We're trying to do what we can to accommodate as many people as we can."

The commission has discussed potential new programming, such as movie nights or food trucks, during these public use times to offset any golf revenue loss.

"It's about exposing more people to our parks," Evans said.

Under the plan, tee times will be cut off at 11 a.m. Sundays. The document that outlines the plan states the changes could be extended for another three months after February

Lynn Simon, director of Friends of City Park, said that if the initiative can gather empirical data about the use of the course, it could provide valuable insight that helps all users of City Park.

Friends of City Park is dedicated to preserving the park and strongly advocated for BREC to leave the golf course alone throughout the process of creating the master plan.

"Many of our members honestly don't see a pressing need to shut down golf on Sunday afternoons. But we are keeping an open mind," Simon said.

Baton Rouge resident Sallie Williams often takes advantage of City Park and its surrounding space. She and nine of her friends have ridden their bikes in the area three times a week ever since the pandemic.

Williams heard about the pilot program for the golf course and plans to take advantage of it.

"I would like to take a picnic over there and also just be able to walk that area with my husband," she said. "It's such a beautiful spot."

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SCALISE

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dozen races still to be decided.

"The election of Jim Jordan is a sign of the members' confidence for him," Johnson said. "The signal being sent here is we are ready for the fight. … Jim Jordan knows how to do this."

Jordan said at the same news conference that the Republican minority will oppose Democrats in committee, on the floor and on the stump "every single day." "Over the next two years House Republicans will fight for American families," he said.

Democrats are expected to select House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., as the first Black speaker of the House in January.

'Battle-tested'

Scalise faced Republican members wanting a clean sweep after such a staggering loss for the GOP last week.

Scalise's pitch Tuesday morning leaned into his mastery of Congress's sometimes bewildering rules, coupled with his deep knowledge of the wants and needs of the often-fractured House Republican Conference. He also reminded colleagues of tens of millions of dollars he has raised and distributed to his colleagues, along with tireless campaigning in their districts.



STAFF PHOTO BY ALLISON ROBBERT

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-Jefferson, center, heads to the House GOP leadership forum at the Capitol on Tuesday.

Jordan, 62, said he was "battle-tested." He argued that he would "spotlight how radical" the Democrats are while presenting alternatives and connecting directly with voters. He was first elected in 2007 and was a co-founder of the ultra-conservative House Freedom Caucus.

House Republican members also reelected Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., as the House minority whip, which is second-in-command for the party out of power, for the next two years. He defeated Rep. August Pfluger, R-Texas.

Rep. Lisa McClain, R-Mich., was chosen as chair of the Republican Conference, and Rep. Brian Jack, R-Ga., was elected to chair the congressional GOP's campaign arm.

All Republican members who will serve next year, including representatives new to Congress, were allowed to vote, as were GOP candidates whose runoffs are still pending. That includes state Sen. Blake Miguez, R-New Iberia, who is in a December runoff in Louisiana's 6th Congressional District, and state Rep. Gabe Firment, R-Pollock, who is in a runoff for the 5th Congressional District. Both Miguez and Firment were in Washington to attend briefings for new members.

After serving in the Louisiana Legislature for a dozen years, Scalise came to the House in May 2008 to replace Bobby Jindal, who had been elected governor. He won reelection last week to his district, which includes a handful of precincts in uptown New Orleans but mostly covers the heavily GOP suburbs of Jefferson and southeast parishes, along with the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

He rose from chair of the Republican Study Committee to become the GOP whip in both the majority and minority from 2014 to 2023, when Scalise's bid to replace Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., as House speaker came up short, as did Jordan's effort for the post. After three weeks of disarray, Scalise endorsed elevating Johnson from the back bench to speaker and he was elected House majority leader.

He was nearly killed in 2017 when a gunman opened fire on GOP players practicing for the annual congressional baseball game against Democratic members to benefit charity. In 2023, Scalise had to take off a few weeks to successfully treat a blood cancer.

What's next for Johnson?

Unlike recent Republican speakers who quit the House entirely after losing the party's majority and thus control of the legislative agenda, Johnson told reporters Monday that he plans to remain in office throughout the rest of the year.

But he did not commit to returning to Congress next year to continue representing people who live along the state's western border from the Arkansas line to Cameron Parish.

"I'm still in charge here until early January," Johnson told reporters Monday, according to a MSNOW video of the news conference. "We're going to do our duty. And after that, my commitment and my objective is to help my team ensure that the Republican Party has a very successful 120th Congress. We'll see how that develops."

Johnson will keep his security detail for two more years. Whether he receives other perks, like a hideaway office in the Capitol itself and more staff, will depend on the role he chooses in January.

Johnson added that he is close to both Scalise and Jordan. Trump praised both candidates.

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STAFF PHOTO BY PEARL SPURLOCK

Art Favre, founder and owner of Performance Contractors Inc., speaks during the announcement of the Art Favre School of Construction on Tuesday at LSU.

FAVRE

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contribution.

The new funds will establish an unrestricted endowment, meaning the money can be spent at the university's discretion.

"An unrestricted endowment gives LSU something especially powerful: the ability to be both strategic and nimble," LSU Chancellor Jim Dalton said. "Those resources help us recruit and retain extraordinary faculty, pursue emerging academic and research opportunities, respond to industry needs and ensure students are learning at the leading edge of their fields."

The construction school — which started as a department but the Board of Supervisors voted to elevate to school status last year — will be called the Art Favre School of Construction and housed within the College of Engineering.

The level of school is a broader academic division within the university that the College of Engineering said aligned with the construction management program's growth and student demand, as well as success with industry partnerships.

The physical space will be named the Performance Contractors Construction and Advanced Manufacturing Building — a tribute to the company Favre founded.

Favre said he has pitched his vision for a premier construction management program for 35 years across multiple LSU presidents. Past LSU President William F. Tate IV was a close ally on the project, he said, and current President Wade Rousse took the baton when Tate departed for Rutgers University.

"We all knew we needed more independence to ensure construction had a prominent place in the College of Engineering for the future," Favre said. "The department was growing rapidly but was not keeping up with the needs for more and better-prepared graduates coming into the university. In my mind, most importantly, the LSU CM program was in a unique position to fill a void in construction-specific research to keep America competitive in the world marketplace."

University officials anticipate breaking ground on the Performance Contractors and Advanced Manufacturing Building in 2027. The 148,000-square-foot facility, the planned home of the expanded construction offerings, will be located on South Stadium Drive.

Colvin said the space will allow for increased collaboration, which reflects a broader trend in the industry as engineers and construction professionals "are working closer and closer together."

"You don't bring together and launch a new type of industry that's going to have new tools and using them in new ways unless you have a space that inspires people and a space that people can gather and learn from one another," Colvin said. "A place where our students in the halls, construction managers, construction engineers, computer scientists — they'll run into each other."



