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### **Ethics victories in Senate**

The Senate approved several minor ethics bills Tuesday, giving small victories to LA Ethics 1, a consortium of business groups and good-government organizations formed this year. Senators voted 35-0 for House Bill 340, by Rep. Mack "Bodi" White, R-Central, which would allow the state Ethics Board to pursue cases involving agencies and government offices that punish or fire employees who alleged wrongdoing, even if a separate civil action is ongoing concerning the same set of facts. Lawmakers had stripped the protections out of state code last year, effectively making it impossible for an employee who has filed a work-related civil suit to receive any job protection from the Ethics Board. House Bill 493, by Rep. Regina Barrow, D-Baton Rouge, would require two hours of education training on ethics laws and regulations for all statewide elected officials, legislators and public service commissioners, beginning Jan. 1, 2008. The bill passed 38-0. House Bill 532, by Rep. William Daniel IV, R-Baton Rouge, would establish the position of "ethics administrator" and bar that person from any paid work outside his state job. Gray Sexton, general counsel to the Ethics Board, has a law practice outside his state work and has represented at least one client involved in a matter that was ripe for the board's attention. Senators approved the bill 37-0. White's bill goes to Gov. Kathleen Blanco for her consideration. Barrow's and Daniel's proposals return to the House for the lower chamber's consideration of minor Senate amendments.