

Michael “Mike” Reese

April 30, 2026

Mr. Mark Romero, Chair  
Board of Supervisors, University of Louisiana System  
627 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 2-203  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
Presidential Search Committee  
McNeese State University

Dear Mr. Romero and Members of the Presidential Search Committee:

It is with great enthusiasm and a deep sense of purpose that I submit my application for the position of President of McNeese State University. McNeese has long been central to the economic vitality, workforce strength, and cultural identity of this region, and I believe my decades of service in public life, business, and community leadership have prepared me to advance that mission.

In the Louisiana State Senate, where I have represented District 30 since 2020, I have worked at the heart of the policy decisions that shape public higher education across Louisiana. I collaborate regularly with universities, community colleges, and technical institutions on workforce alignment and funding strategies, and I provide oversight on legislation affecting higher education priorities statewide. As Chairman of the Tax Institute and a member of the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Committee, I lead tax policy initiatives and author legislation to strengthen Louisiana's economic competitiveness. As Co-Chair of the Water Sector Commission, I have managed a \$1.14 billion American Rescue Plan and state-funded infrastructure program from conception through implementation. This program resulted in 224 project grants to date impacting over 4 million Louisiana residents. I understand the funding structures, political landscape, and stakeholder relationships that define public higher education in Louisiana, and I know how to advocate effectively for an institution at the local, state, and national levels. That capacity for external engagement is something I would bring to McNeese from day one.

Ensuring financial sustainability is one of the most consequential responsibilities a president carries, and it is an area where my background translates directly. As Managing Partner and CEO of Reese Companies, a diversified group operating in transportation, logistics, warehousing, aviation, and commercial real estate, I have spent more than three decades managing complex multi-entity organizations, overseeing large-scale budgets, and building the strategic partnerships that sustain long-term growth. As a member of the Board of Directors of Merchants and Farmers Bank, overseeing a \$540 million institution, I have deepened that experience in financial governance, risk management, and strategic planning. I know how to read a balance sheet, make difficult resource allocation decisions, and build internal systems that keep an organization on sound financial footing.

Philanthropy and resource development are equally critical, and my tenure as Chairman of the Rapides Foundation gave me direct experience in this area. As the leader of a \$400 million public health and community foundation serving nine parishes across Central Louisiana, I oversaw grant-making strategies, managed board operations, and built the donor and community relationships that sustained the organization's mission over time. Expanding postsecondary access and investing in workforce development were central to that work, and I would carry the same commitment to McNeese, working to grow the university's endowment and cultivate the partnerships that strengthen its long-term position.

Strengthening community and industry partnerships is something I have done throughout my career, and it is something McNeese is uniquely positioned to deepen. Through my legislative work, my service on regional economic development organizations, and my business leadership, I have spent decades building relationships between public institutions, employers, and community stakeholders. I am keenly aware of the national significance McNeese has achieved through its designation as the PHMSA National Center of Excellence for LNG Safety. As Southwest Louisiana continues to grow as an energy hub, McNeese has a real opportunity to expand its role as a driver of regional economic development, and I would make cultivating those industry partnerships a priority.

My roots in higher education governance run deep. As a member of the Louisiana Board of Regents and the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission, I engaged directly in the governance of Louisiana's higher education system, participating in budgeting, academic program approval, and financial aid policy. As President of the Student Government Association at the University of Louisiana at Monroe, I represented the student body before university administrators, developing foundational skills in consensus-building and shared governance that have stayed with me throughout my career. My time in higher education also included a significant commitment to recruitment and retention of students with my involvement as part of our freshman orientation staff and parent orientation staff. Key to the success of the University is the ability to assess the needs and challenges of our students and to create excitement in the recruitment process.

I was born and raised in Leesville, Louisiana. My roots are in this part of the state, and my professional life has been devoted to strengthening it. I understand the cultural heritage, the economic promise, and the challenges that define Southwest Louisiana, and I have the relationships, the track record, and the genuine affection for this region to serve as McNeese's most passionate advocate and ambassador.

I approach this opportunity with humility and a genuine belief that the faculty, staff, and students of McNeese are the institution's greatest asset. My role as president would be to support and amplify their work. I would be honored to bring my experience, my relationships, and my commitment to this role, and I welcome the opportunity to speak with the search committee.

Respectfully,



Michael "Mike" Reese  
State Senator, District 30 – Louisiana  
Managing Partner & CEO, Reese Companies

# MICHAEL "MIKE" REESE

Accomplished public servant, business executive, and community leader with over three decades of experience across government, economic development, transportation, real estate, and finance. Currently serving in the Louisiana State Senate, with leadership roles in fiscal policy, infrastructure investment, statewide governance, and aligning higher education institutions with workforce and regional economic needs.

A record of building lasting partnerships between public institutions, higher education systems, regional development organizations, and industry leaders — grounded in prior service on the Louisiana Board of Regents and the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission, where he gained direct experience in higher education governance, funding, and policy development.

Proven ability to lead complex organizations, oversee large-scale budgets, build consensus among diverse stakeholders, and drive initiatives that strengthen communities, expand opportunity, and support long-term institutional success.

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Higher Education Governance & Policy	<b>EXPERTISE</b>	Workforce Development & Alignment
Economic & Community Development		Legislative & Regulatory Affairs
Budget Development & Fiscal Oversight		Public-Private Partnerships
Organizational Leadership & Strategy		Infrastructure & Capital Investment

## EXPERIENCE

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### Louisiana State Senate — Baton Rouge, Louisiana

*State Senator, District 30 | 2020 – Present*

Elected to serve a multi-parish district representing Central and Southwest Louisiana. Provides leadership on key legislative, fiscal, and policy matters impacting statewide governance and economic growth.

#### Leadership Roles & Responsibilities:

- Chairman, Judiciary B Committee
- Member, Revenue & Fiscal Affairs Committee
- Member, Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee
- Chairman, Tax Institute
- Co-Chair, Water Sector Commission (\$1.14B Federal/State funded infrastructure program)

#### Key Contributions:

- Provides oversight on legislation affecting higher education, workforce development, and state funding priorities
- Leads tax policy initiatives and authors legislation to strengthen Louisiana's economic competitiveness and fiscal health
- Collaborates with universities, community colleges, and technical institutions on workforce alignment and funding strategies
- Works with state agencies, local governments, and stakeholders to advance regional and statewide economic development

## **Louisiana Central** – Central Louisiana

*Executive Committee Member | 2011 – Present*

Member of the executive committee of a regional economic development organization focused on business recruitment, retention, and workforce alignment.

- Provides strategic leadership on workforce development initiatives connecting regional employers with educational institutions
- Supports regional economic growth through sustained collaboration with public and private stakeholders across Central Louisiana

## **Merchants and Farmers Bank** – Louisiana

*Board of Directors | 2009 – Present*

- Provides governance and financial oversight for a regional banking institution with \$540 million in assets
- Participates in strategic planning, risk management, and economic development initiatives
- Supports lending and financial strategies that contribute to regional growth

## **Rapides Foundation** – Central Louisiana

*Trustee; Chairman of the Board | 2012 – 2018*

\$400M+ public health and community foundation serving nine parishes across Central Louisiana, with a three-pillar focus on Healthy People, Education, and Healthy Communities.

- Led governance and strategic direction of one of the region's largest philanthropic organizations
- Oversaw investments in education, workforce, and community development — including initiatives to increase educational attainment and expand postsecondary access across the nine-parish service area
- Guided grant-making strategy supporting K-12 school readiness, early childhood programs, workforce skills development, and reconnecting disconnected youth to education and employment pathways
- Managed board operations, strategic planning, investment strategy and grant-making priorities

## **Reese Companies** – Louisiana

*(Transportation, Logistics, Real Estate & Aviation)*

*Managing Partner & CEO | 2001 – Present*

Began working in the transportation business in high school— starting on the ground floor and learning every facet of operations before ultimately acquiring and leading the enterprise. Leads a diversified group of companies operating in transportation, logistics, warehousing, aviation, and commercial real estate development.

- Provides global logistics and transportation services for the U.S. Department of Defense
- Oversees commercial real estate development and investment portfolio across multiple entities
- Manages complex operations, budgets, and personnel across multiple business lines
- Develops strategic partnerships supporting infrastructure and economic growth

## **HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE**

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### **Louisiana Board of Regents** – Baton Rouge, Louisiana

*Board Member | 1997 – 1998*

- Participated in governance of Louisiana's higher education system
- Oversaw budgeting, academic program approval, and strategic planning
- Engaged in statewide policy development impacting public universities

## **Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission** – Baton Rouge, Louisiana

*Commission Member | 1997 – 1998*

- Oversaw state scholarship programs and financial aid policy
- Participated in budgeting and program administration
- Supported initiatives to expand access and affordability in higher education

## **University of Louisiana at Monroe** – Monroe, Louisiana

*President, Student Government Association | 1997 – 1998*

- Elected by the student body to lead university-wide shared governance
- Represented student interests before university administration, system management, and the Board of Regents
- Developed early leadership experience in consensus-building, budgeting, and organizational management

## **EDUCATION**

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- **University of Louisiana at Monroe** – Monroe, Louisiana
- **Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance & Commercial Banking**
- Minor: Economics | President, Student Government Association | December 1998

## **LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

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**Fort Polk Progress, Inc.** — *Founder & Former Chairman* | Regional advocacy organization supporting military families and economic development in the Fort Polk region. Worked with the Department of Defense and the Congressional Delegation to secure over \$1.2bn in military construction and stabilize force structure.

**Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance** — *Board Member*

**Louisiana Military Advisory Council** — *Charter Member*

**Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition (I-14 Corridor)** — *Board Member*

**Christmas with a Trooper** — *Charter Board Member*

**Leesville Lions Club** — Member & Former President | Supports Louisiana Lions Camp, providing free camp experiences for youth with respiratory disorders, special needs, juvenile diabetes, and childhood cancer

**Association of the United States Army, Leonidas Polk Chapter** — *Executive Board*

Active member of numerous civic, economic development, and professional organizations across Louisiana, including the Louisiana Motor Transport Association, Louisiana Bankers Association, Association of Defense Communities, and multiple regional chambers of commerce to include Cenla, Vernon, Beauregard, West-Cal and Southwest Alliance.

## **HONORS & RECOGNITIONS**

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- Defense Community Leadership Award, Association of Defense Communities (2016)
- LegisGator of the Year (2020) — recognizes state legislators for outstanding support of pro-business policies, workforce development, and economic growth
- Military Child Education Coalition, Outstanding Education Partnership Award
- Spirit of the Eagle Award, Calcasieu Area Council, Boy Scouts of America
- Civic Service Award, Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance
- Vernon Chamber of Commerce Civic Leadership Award
- Lion of the Year & Melvin Jones Fellow Award, Lions Club International
- Hero of Fort Polk Award
- Rotary Club, Service Above Self Award

- Don Goins Historic Preservation Award, Leesville Main Street / Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation
- Vernon Parish School Board Superintendent's Certificate for Support to Vernon Parish Schools
- Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts, Distinguished Service Award (2020)