

American Press SUNDAY TALK



In the undated archive photo, Lanny Roy, seated, leads a group of demonstrators from A Community Voice at the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge. The group was urging Gov. Bobby Jindal to take action on issues such as health care and education. Associated Press

Lanny Roy: A community voice

Activist, leader, organizer to be honored by Law Center Board

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For more than 50 years, Lanny Roy has dedicated his life to being a community activist and leader, working with many organizations and politicians to help the underprivileged and less fortunate.

"It's always been in me," said Roy, 76. "I didn't know that I was going to be some type of leader or activist."

The Board of Directors of the Southwest Louisiana Law Center on Thursday, Sept. 17 will honor Roy by making him the first Emeritus board member. The move will allow Roy to attend meetings and speak to the board, but not have the responsibilities current board members have.

"I was at a loss for words when I first heard the news," Roy said. "I'm certainly proud that somebody has noticed some of the work I've done as an activist, leader and an organizer."

Despite being wheelchair bound from neuropathy caused by chemical exposure while working construction at a chemical plant, he said it has not slowed him down. Because of the work-related accident, Roy said he has worked to change working conditions for employees.

"What motivated me to keep on working is that I have always been a working man," he said.

Roy also served as the executive director and vice president for the local ACORN chapter, now known as A Community Voice. He said he was a "full-fledged board member" with ACORN for 25 years. Dur-



On Thursday, Sept. 17, Lanny Roy, 76, will become the first emeritus board member of the Southwest Louisiana Law Center.

ing that time, he interacted with presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and lobbied Congress.

"It is a people's organization," Roy said. "We reach out to all because I carry out the Lord's agenda. Leave no one behind."

Roy said he has worked with the Southwest Louisiana Law Center, formerly Southwest Louisiana Legal Services,

since the 1960s, originally as a client. While he isn't an attorney, he said he worked with then executive director Jim Ortega to help bring money into low-income communities.

"We touched so many people's lives in a positive way," he said. "We were the voice for those disenfranchised people who didn't have a voice."

Roy said his relationship with Tom Morris, former Unit-

ed Way of Southwest Louisiana director, was instrumental in keeping the law center active with grant money.

Roy said he implemented programs that brought hundreds of thousands of dollars to the local community along with the state and national levels. They included workshops for first-time homebuyers and classes to empower and provide resources to the

underprivileged.

"I started that when I found out there was literacy among our poorest people," he said.

"They didn't know how to budget (or) prepare themselves for a loan."

Roy also assisted victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, bringing 500 of them to Washington D.C. His testimony in front of a U.S. Senate committee helped to secure

a \$150,000 loan for victims to restore their homes. He said the loan would be forgivable if the person would stay in their home or business for at least three years. Roy, who interacted with then U.S. Sen. Barack Obama during the hearings, said he recently received a heroes award for the 10th anniversary of the storm.

"This is the type of leader I am," Roy said.

Roy said he also helped to negotiate the overpasses in the city of Lake Charles, one on Enterprise Boulevard and Shattuck Street, known as the Kevin Wayne Yokum Memorial Overpass.

Mark Judson, the law center's current executive director, said Judson said Roy's longevity of service "has just been amazing." He mentioned one instance where Roy influenced local judges to allow a portion of money from large litigation suits to be donated to local charitable organizations.

"He is a fixture who keeps the law center on task," Judson said. "He's all about justice."

Judson said that A Community Voice still holds the first-time homebuyer classes on the third Thursday of each month, along with an annual Lake Charles Housing and Community Fair. He said Roy has involved the law center in both of these activities. The next housing fair is set for 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Oct. 31 at the MLK Center, 2009 N. Simmons St.

"It is in line with what the law center tends to accomplish," Judson said.