

# **Exhibit 10**

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## In governor's race, we'll see if 'Wags' can tail top dog Landry



[Gree LaRose](#)

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LABI and RLDF.org photos

One of the bigger questions hanging over the 2023 governor's race has been answered now that Congressman Garret Graves, R-Baton Rouge, has opted to stay out. His decision came Tuesday morning, just hours after news broke that his good friend and Louisiana Association of Business and Industry President Stephen Waguespack would become a candidate.

"After much prayerful consideration and hundreds of conversations, it is clear that the best service we can provide to Louisianians and the next governor is by building on our wins in the U.S. Congress," Graves said in an email Tuesday.

A closer look at their respective backgrounds reveals many similarities.

Graves, 51, and Waguespack, 49, were both part of former Gov. Bobby Jindal's administration – Graves as Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) chairman, and Waguespack as executive counsel, chief of staff and later a state school board appointee.

In his email, Graves hinted at his support for another soon-to-be-announced candidate for governor.

"In the coming days, the field for governor will brighten," he said. "And Louisiana will have a generational opportunity to write America's greatest comeback story."

It wasn't until this email that Graves offered much insight on his contemplation about running for governor. Since saying last fall he was considering the race, the congressman has kept his intentions close to his vest.

Graves was also discouraged from running by the leader of the Louisiana Republican Party, which endorsed Attorney General Jeff Landry months ago. State GOP chairman Louis Gurvich issued a [message to members](#) on the party's website Jan. 15 that strongly expressed reasons why Graves should bypass the race.

In his message, titled “Unity is Our Only Path to Victory,” Gurvich justified the Republican State Central Committee’s endorsement of Landry for governor – three months before anyone else announced their candidacy – and listed why Graves should continue to represent Louisiana’s 6th House district in Congress.

“If Garret does enter the governor’s race, he will start well behind Jeff Landry in popularity,” Gurvich wrote as one reason for Graves to stay in his House seat.

Graves’ early exit from Congress could also lead to a Democrat taking over the seat, according to Gurvich. His possible replacement? Gov. John Bel Edwards, the chairman said.

A candidacy for the U.S. House would be a stepping stone for Edwards, Gurvich predicted.

“The Democrats would instantly commit tens of millions of dollars to John Bel’s election,” he wrote. “A few years in the House would place him in an excellent position to run for U.S. Senator in 2026, when Bill Cassidy must run for re-election or leave the Senate.”

In his email Tuesday, Graves mentioned nothing about the Louisiana GOP’s support for Landry, although he has met in person with the attorney general recently. It’s assumed their conversation included the governor’s race, though neither official has discussed the meeting publicly.

But with Waguespack leaning toward a candidacy, the argument that Gurvich and the big-money GOP donors kept Graves out of the race doesn’t hold water. Waguespack and Graves are connected to many of the same fiscal backers, and the LABI chairman doesn’t seem daunted by the six-month advantage Landry has enjoyed in fundraising.

That edge is likely to grow after Landry announced Wednesday he has the endorsement of wealthy GOP businessmen [Boysie Bollinger and Joe Canizaro](#).

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Waguespack, known as “Wags” among his peers, has the same right-aligned stances as Graves but without the voting record Graves’ detractors would have likely used against him in the governor’s race.

Graves has a deep conservative streak. He’s a member of the Republican Study Committee, a conservative caucus within Congress. He did call on former President Donald Trump to resign a day after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, but he voted against impeaching him for insurrection.

In his Jan. 8, 2021, column for LABI, Waguespack summed up events two days earlier at the Capitol with his opening words: “Ridiculous. Unbelievable. Heartbreaking.”

“These words, and many more that should not be uttered by a gentleman, are the words that came to mind this week as images of our Nation’s Capitol being treated like a frat house on a drunken weekend came across the airwaves,” he continued.

While spelling out his philosophical differences with the incoming President Joe Biden, Waguespack made it clear he accepted the results of the 2020 election as valid. He even leveled a critique of outgoing President Donald Trump in the process.

“Our current President, rather than running on a strong economic record of job creation, has relied more on incendiary rhetoric to provoke furor and rage against those who disagree with his positions,” Waguespack wrote. “Our incoming President promises to replace our foundational free enterprise economic system with one that more closely resembles the failed socialist structures of the past, many of which were found in countries we bravely fought to reform generations ago.”

On COVID-19, Waguespack argued against business vaccine mandates while also encouraging everyone to get the shot. In November 2021, [he acknowledged having received the vaccine himself](#). LABI also lobbied state lawmakers to give employers a break on unemployment taxes once the pandemic triggered a run on job benefits.

Graves was similarly pragmatic during the pandemic. Early on, he conveyed the [various actions the government took](#) in response to COVID-19 and kept abreast of what the medical field was [learning about the virus](#). As Congress fashioned pandemic recovery plans, Graves argued for additional economic resources and well as funding to continue community [testing and vaccination](#) events.

Waguespack and Graves are also similarly aligned on energy issues. The LABI president has been critical of [Biden’s moratorium on exploration leases](#), and his organization typically lands on the pro-industry side of environmental issues.

In the U.S. House, Graves has been a consistent supporter of fossil fuel legislation while also advocating for alternatives. He has promoted exploration for rare earth minerals needed to create solar panels while also opposing the Paris Climate Accords. The chief weakness of the international pact is that it doesn’t address the world’s top polluters, Graves has said.

The [League of Conservation Voters](#) scores Graves at 6% over his congressional career for his record on environmental policy. While green groups are among his campaign contributors, money from the oil and gas industry led the way in the most recent election cycle, according to [OpenSecrets.org](#).

Graves has routinely said the fossil fuel industry will be involved in solving environmental issues, yet he has challenged fellow Republicans who question the scientific truth of climate change.

The comparison reveals how much Graves and Waguespack are alike, but the question that lingers is whether they are different enough from Landry to pull enough support from middle-of-the-road voters who won’t support Democratic candidate Shawn Wilson.

One thing’s for sure: If you’re a Republican voter in Louisiana this year, you can’t complain about a lack of choices.

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