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Young Leadership Council Calls on State to Keep the Lights on the Crescent City Connection Bridge

New Orleans, LA (Monday, May 21, 2012): The Young Leadership Council (YLC) is urging the State of Louisiana to keep the decorative lights on the Crescent City Connection (CCC or Bridge) lit. With the expiration of the tolls in December 2012, the CCC will be dark without a funding source.

The YLC put the lights on the CCC in 1987 as the result of its first major capital fundraising campaign. In exchange, there was an understanding that the State would fund all aspects of the decorative lighting on the CCC. All of this occurred before tolls were in place, and thus the position of the YLC is that the decorative lights should remain on irrespective of the tolls.

When tolls were added to the CCC a few years after the lights, revenues from the toll collections became the primary but not exclusive funding source for the Bridge lights, and that remains the case today.

When the Bridge was lit twenty-five years ago New Orleans was in a different climate. The YLC was a beacon of light for young professionals, and the CCC lights represented the illumination of the greater New Orleans area. "Many great cities in the world have an iconic structure in its skyline. Paris has the Eiffel Tower. New York has the Statue of Liberty. San Francisco has the Golden Gate Bridge. As young people looking to make a positive impact on the perception of New Orleans both locally and nationally, we committed to lighting the bridge," said Chris Johnsen, president of the YLC in 1987 and the primary force behind the project back then.

The region has flourished post-Katrina so much so that we are welcoming the world to our doorstep in January 2013 for the Super Bowl. We cannot allow for basic infrastructure to be put offline when the area will be in the spotlight. This undermines the pervasive message touted by regional leaders that our community is being built back – not the way it was before the storm, but better. Turning out the iconic lights in our skyline is counter to every economic development strategy being implemented.

"How does a city ranked by Forbes Magazine as one of the world's biggest brain magnets and included in the Brookings Institute recent study as one of the strongest-performing metro areas in the nation pull the plug on itself, literally," says Joseph Giarrusso, immediate past president of the YLC. "The post-Katrina culture in New Orleans centers around growth and innovation. Removing an iconic image from the skyline contradicts those principles."

Over the weekend the YLC, with the help of over 2,000 members, launched a [social media campaign](#) to raise awareness among residents of the greater New Orleans area to voice their support for the Bridge lights in hopes that state legislators will find a way to keep the lights on by the time the session ends on June 4. We anticipate incorporating television and radio ads in the days ahead. Anyone who would like to support the initiative is urged to [contact their legislator](#) immediately.

Photo courtesy of Mike Palumbo.

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The Young Leadership Council is a non-profit, non-partisan civic organization created to develop leadership through community projects. Through volunteer-created community projects, the YLC recruits and retains young professionals to New Orleans, creating a positive impact on the quality of life in the region. The oldest, independent YPO (young professionals' organization) in the country, the YLC has raised more than \$25 million to support community projects in and around the New Orleans area since 1986.