

# St. Tammany Chamber goes big at Washington Mardi Gras 2024

BY DARREN COOPER

Contributing writer

St. Tammany Parish is bringing the party to Washington Mardi Gras.

"We have grown up," said St. Tammany Parish Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Lacey Osborne. "We are no longer a bedroom community. We hope to grow our business community, and we know there is a lot of potential here."

Washington Mardi Gras is a reasonable facsimile of the real thing. It was started in 1943 by the Louisiana State Society and has grown into a multiday convention/meeting/party of major state and national political officials.

Osborne has attended Washington Mardi Gras in the past and said she has seen the different booths and presentations by various Louisiana parishes and business groups set up at all the events for the weekend. The idea hit her that it was time for St. Tammany Parish to strut its stuff.

This year the parish, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and multiple sponsors, are hosting their own reception hailed as "It's a Shore Thing" party, noting St. Tammany Parish's new brand and logo touting the scenic northshore. The party is at the Jack Rose Saloon Thursday, Jan. 25, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. in Washington, D.C.

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Brees

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LACEY OSBORNE,  
Chamber of Commerce  
president and CEO

having our two state senators, our majority whip and maybe our speaker of the House," said Osborne referring to Republican Mike Johnson, who hails from the 4th District in North Louisiana. "We want them to see and hear about St. Tammany."

If this sounds like a party where St. Tammany officials can mingle with decision-makers in Washington and talk up the northshore, you'd be right. If it sounds like a fun time, you'd be right too.

"Part of the goals we set as a Chamber in 2023 was to establish an improved presence for St. Tammany Parish in Washington, D.C.," Osborne said. "We are now the fourth-largest parish in the

state, and we have a significant business presence with more of our business people traveling for this and being members of the krewe."

There are different parties and balls for a three-day stretch starting Thursday. This year, the Economic Development Luncheon Friday, Jan. 26, features U.S. Sen. John Kennedy and King LXXV Drew Brees in downtown D.C. It is invitational only.

But that's just one of several big and small events connected to Louisiana Mardi Gras, including an unofficial Mardi Gras ball hosted by the Krewe of Louisiana, complete with princesses, queens (in the past, the Slidell Camelia Queen has been honored) an indoor parade in the ballroom, and private parties hosted by members of the U.S. House and Senate in a nearby hotel. Osborne said she believes St. Tammany Parish has a lot going for it that can impress lawmakers in the nation's capital.

"We've ordered 25,000 beads, and (they) will have our logo on the medallion and say 'St. Tammany Parish. It's a Shore Thing,'" Osborne said. "We know there are deals taking place at the ball and relationships get established among business people that can have an impact in St. Tammany Parish by locating businesses here or expanding existing businesses here."

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