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# Miss. swipes corruption kingship

*La. loses rank as  
No. 1 crooked state*

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BATON ROUGE — Some will cry foul, and others will cry not foul enough. Louisianians know this: you take the good, and the not-so-good, regardless — as long as you're No. 1.

That's why an announcement scheduled for today in Washington, D.C., will be seen as a cruel blow by many in the Pelican State: Louisiana is not the most corrupt state in the nation.

In a state where crookedness has long been seen as less a political liability than dullness, some will no doubt find shame in this sudden fall to grace.

In the ranking compiled by Corporate Crime Reporter, Louisiana trails Mississippi in what this Washington, D.C., newsletter calls the corruption

rate, which it defines as the number of federal public corruption convictions in the past 10 years per 100,000 population.

Being only the second most corrupt state in the nation will not flatter citizens who have taken pride in former Gov. Edwin Edwards — now serving 10 years in federal lockup in Texas — assorted jailed state insurance commissioners, and various high current and former public officials under investigation or indictment.

In a state where the latest scandal provokes more amused chuckles than head-shaking, this news from the Washington spoilsports is sure to provoke grumbling. But the numbers don't seem to lie.

A professional in the field reacted warily to the news. "It means either we've been more successful in Louisiana, or it means there's more public corruption. I hope it's the former, but I fear it's the latter," said David Dugas, the U.S. Attorney in Baton Rouge.

Dugas even seemed to take some solace in the state's slip in the rankings.

"I heard candidates say in the last election, we're at the bottom of the good lists and at the top of the bad lists. At least we're not No. 1 on this list," the federal prosecutor said.

Mississippi's corruption rate, in the Corporate Crime Reporter ranking, is 7.48, while Louisiana's is 7.05. At least, the state is ahead of No. 3, Alaska, at 6.50. Cleanest of the 50 states is Nebraska, with only .59 convictions per 100,000.

The report, Public Corruption in the United States, will be released today at 10 a.m. in the Murrow Room of the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The ranking factors prosecutions of local, state and federal officials.

Dugas offers some hope that Louisiana will one day regain its status.

"I can tell you this," he said. "We're going to continue to investigate public corruption until we run out of cases."