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World Trade Center of New Orleans, Louisiana Consular Corps Launch New Trade Communications Initiative

New Orleans, La.-- The World Trade Center of New Orleans (WTCNO) and the Louisiana Consular Corps have produced two new informational tools designed to help local and international businesses explore mutually beneficial business relationships and access Louisiana-based career and honorary consuls who can assist in those business development efforts.

A country by country economic data booklet has been researched and prepared by WTCNO for distribution to a wide audience of governmental and economic interests in Louisiana including state legislators, key state and local government departments, economic development agencies, business media, chambers of commerce and universities. "This data helps bring clarity to the significant economic impact foreign countries have on Louisiana's economic vitality, and provides a point of contact for each of the 55 nations represented in Louisiana by career and honorary consuls," said Dominik Knoll, Chief Executive Officer of the World Trade Center of New Orleans.

An electronic version of the booklet, *Economic Ties Between Louisiana and the World*, can be accessed at http://www.wtcno.org/Economic_Ties_Louisiana_World_2014. Data available in the booklet includes country-specific exports from Louisiana, in-state jobs created through commercial interaction, the number of tax free shopping transactions and number of visitors to Louisiana from each country.

Louisiana Consular Corps Dean Constance Willems, Honorary Consul for The Netherlands, believes that the data "Substantiates the fact that international trade and commerce between Louisiana and the world is a vital and increasingly important part of the state's economy that doesn't get the attention it often deserves. Clearly, Louisiana and New Orleans continue to be of great relevance to the rest of the world. With the state's on-going development of energy resources and an increased ability to export our energy, it is reasonable to assume that our value to the world economy will continue to escalate."

Data gathered in the booklet indicates that Louisiana exported nearly \$34 billion in goods and services to foreign countries represented by consuls in 2013, and that 171,892 Louisiana jobs are attributable to Louisiana's foreign exports to these countries. Total foreign visitors to Louisiana reached nearly 150,000 in 2013.

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The second announced initiative is the launch of a new website for the Louisiana Consular Corps (www.LouisianaConsularCorps.com). According to Dean Willems, "The site is designed to make the work of Louisiana-based consular representatives more accessible to the public, and to remind the public of the valuable work consuls perform in assisting with projects that drive or support economic, educational and cultural exchange with 55 nations on five continents. While consuls have existed in Louisiana since the early days of the Louisiana territory, our work often flies beneath radar, and business executives and others looking for opportunities in the region don't always understand how we can assist their efforts."

While the number of career consuls in Louisiana has declined as part of a global trend, the number of honorary consuls appointed to serve in Louisiana continues to grow. Tanzania and Ukraine are among those nations that have recently appointed local consuls for the first time. Last year, Monaco filled a long-vacant consular position in New Orleans, a testament, Willems believes, to Louisiana's growing importance to the world economy.

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The World Trade Center of New Orleans (WTCNO) is one of the strongest international business organizations in the Gulf Coast region, consisting of 1,000+ companies as well as high profile individual members. This membership base represents a diverse group of industry leaders, companies, professional organizations, and government institutions that include manufacturers, energy, agriculture, maritime, digital media, foreign consulates, and other interests. In 2013, member organizations were able to significantly contribute to the state's record-breaking exports, the total value of which exceeded \$63.1 billion. This strong international organization creates a variety of opportunities for its stakeholders with the objective to add wealth to its community as well as create jobs through international trade and related services while fostering business and economic development by engaging in allied activities.

The Louisiana Consular Corps represents 55 countries from five continents in the development of economic, educational and cultural opportunities in Louisiana and along the Gulf coast. The mission of the organization and its US Department of State-approved consular representatives, is to promote peace through commerce.