

Tulane professor and author receives Louisiana Writer Award and named a Louisianian of the Year

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Photo of John M. Barry speaking at the National Immunization Conference in Atlanta, GA in 2018

A Tulane professor and author who has written about the 1918 flu pandemic and the 1927 Mississippi River flood has received the state of Louisiana's annual writing award and has also been named a Louisianian of the Year for his role in coastal conservation.

Last week John M. Barry, an adjunct professor at the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, was named a [Louisianian of the Year by Louisiana Life](#), a statewide general interest magazine covering the lifestyles and destinations of Louisiana, for his passion about coastal restoration and environmental causes.

Barry has served on both the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. He also launched [one of the most ambitious, wide-ranging environmental lawsuits in the history of the United States](#) against the oil and gas industry requesting they pay damages for wetlands loss in southeastern Louisiana.

Barry, in addition to the Louisianian of the Year award, was chosen for the 21st annual Louisiana Writer Award, given by the state library's [Louisiana Center for the Book](#).

Barry has written several books, including "[The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History](#)" and "[Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America](#)."

"The contributions of Mr. Barry to literature, history, government and the education of Louisianians and citizens across the country have been nothing short of remarkable. We are pleased and also fortunate that he chose to make his home in Louisiana," Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser, who oversees the state library, said in a statement.

"The resurgence of interest in 'The Great Influenza' since the start of the coronavirus outbreak proves the timeliness, and timelessness, of John's work. His expertise and dedication to Louisiana, and in particular, his role in coastal restoration, are worthy of praise and celebration," said State Librarian Rebecca Hamilton.

Past recipients of the [Louisiana Writer Award](#) include Ernest Gaines, James Lee Burke and Tim Gautreaux. The award is traditionally presented at the Louisiana Book Festival, but the 2020 event was canceled this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Obviously either award is flattering, much less both. I consider myself a writer first, above everything else, and some very fine writers have won this award," said Barry. "At the risk of sounding more pompous than I hope I am, I also believe that knowledge is not morally neutral. Sometimes it compels action. My writing gave me knowledge that compelled me to get involved. Of course one of my friends says I just like to fight, and that explains it."