



LOUISIANA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

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LOUISIANA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES BOARD OFFICERS, TRUSTEES

Baton Rouge — The Louisiana Hospital Association (LHA) announced its 2022-2023 Board of Trustee officers and newly-elected board members during its annual membership meeting on July 18.

Greg C. Feirn, CPA, chief executive officer (CEO) of LCMC Health in New Orleans, will serve as the LHA Board of Trustees chair. He received the gavel from **Jason E. Cobb, FACHE**, CEO of Rapides Regional Medical Center in Alexandria, who will now serve as immediate past chair. **Mary Ellen Pratt, FACHE**, CEO of St. James Parish Hospital in Litcher, will serve as the Association's chair-elect, and **Rene J. Ragas, FACHE**, president and CEO of Woman's Hospital in Baton Rouge, was elected treasurer.

In addition to the officers, the LHA Board of Trustees is composed of at-large and district trustees. **Jerry A. "Jaf" Fielder II, SPHR**, president and CEO of Willis-Knighton Health System in Shreveport, and **Kristin S. Wolkart, RN, FACHE**, executive vice president and system chief nursing officer for the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System in Baton Rouge, were elected as at-large trustees for a two-year term. **Chris Fox**, division president-facility based services for LHC Group in Lafayette, was re-elected to serve a second term as an at-large trustee.

The following individuals were elected to serve a two-year term as district trustees:

- **Bayou District: Phyllis L. Peoples**, president and CEO of Terrebonne General Health System in Houma; and
- **Northshore District: Joan M. Coffman, FACHE**, president and CEO of St. Tammany Health System in Covington.

The following individuals were re-elected to serve a two-year term as district trustees:

- **Central District: Christopher "Chris" Karam, FACHE**, senior vice president of group operations of CHRISTUS Health in Alexandria;
- **Northwest District: David C. Jones**, administrator and CEO of North Caddo Medical Center in Vivian; and
- **Southeast District: Edgardo J. Tenreiro, FACHE**, president and CEO of Baton Rouge General.

"The LHA is grateful to our new and returning board members for their leadership and their dedication to the industry," said LHA President and CEO Paul A. Salles. "These members continually strive to improve patient care and lower healthcare cost for Louisianians."

About the Louisiana Hospital Association

Established in 1926, the Louisiana Hospital Association is a non-profit organization representing hospitals and healthcare provider groups across the state. The mission of the LHA is to support its members through advocacy, education and services. For more information, visit the LHA website at www.lhaonline.org.

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[Chris Karam](#)

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[Mary Ellen Pratt](#)

[Rene Ragas](#)

[Edgardo Tenreiro](#)

[Kristin Wolkart](#)

Biographies of Elected Board Officers and Members in Alphabetical Order by Last Name:

Joan M. Coffman, FACHE, was elected as the Northshore district trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees. Coffman is president and CEO of St. Tammany Health System in Covington. Prior to St. Tammany, she served as president and CEO of HSHS St. Mary's Hospital in Decatur, Illinois from 2017 to 2018 and as president and CEO of HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin from 2008 to 2017. She served as CEO of the Louisiana Clinic, a multispecialty physician clinic in New Orleans, and as the assistant administrator of Lindy Boggs Medical Center in New Orleans until 2005 when the facility closed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She earned her Bachelor of Science from the College of St. Francis in Joliet, Illinois and a Master of Business Administration from the University of New Orleans. She returned to the New Orleans area in 2018 to serve as the president and CEO of St. Tammany Health System, where she began her career as a radiologic technologist. She is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE) and currently serves as chair for the Nominating Committee of the Governing Council for the American Hospital Association's (AHA) Section for Small or Rural Hospitals. In 2021, she was elected as an at-large delegate to the AHA's Regional Policy Board 7 and named by CityBusiness as a Woman of the Year. She also serves on numerous boards, including the St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce, Northshore Business Council, St. Tammy Corporation, Vizient Southern States, Safe Haven and Ochsner Health Network. She was also instrumental in service to her community as a member of the St. Tammany Economic Recovery and Resiliency Advisory Council, established in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Greg C. Feirn, CPA, was elected to serve as the chair for the LHA Board of Trustees. Feirn is the CEO of LCMC Health, a six-hospital system that he spearheaded the creation of in 2009. Today, LCMC Health includes Children's Hospital New Orleans, Touro, University Medical Center, New Orleans East Hospital, East Jefferson General Hospital and West Jefferson Medical Center, and as the CEO, he provides strategic leadership and direction across all locations. He brings more than 26 years of healthcare leadership experience to the table, drawing on his knowledge and expertise to lead the way for both the system and industry. After 11 years in leadership at Children's Hospital New Orleans, he turned his focus to building a health system to serve the diverse needs of the New Orleans community. As part of this vision, he served as the head negotiator when Children's Hospital acquired Touro Infirmary and provided instrumental leadership during the formation of LCMC Health. After spending several years as the new system's chief financial officer and chief operating officer, he was appointed CEO of LCMC Health in 2014. Originally from Wisconsin, he has fully immersed himself in the New Orleans community, playing key leadership roles in a variety of local programs, including serving on the boards of Greater New Orleans, Inc., Metairie Park Country Day School, the Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region, New Orleans Museum of Art and the LHA.

Jerry A. “Jaf” Fielder II, SPHR, was elected as an at-large trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees. Fielder is president and CEO of Willis-Knighton Health System in Northwest Louisiana. He is responsible for an integrated healthcare delivery system consisting of four acute care hospitals, a rehabilitation institute, an extensive multi-specialty physician network and the state’s largest retirement community, The Oaks of Louisiana. He has more than 30 years of experience in healthcare management, having started with Willis-Knighton at the age of 23. Prior to his October 2021 appointment as president and CEO, he held multiple senior roles across the organization, including chief operating officer, senior vice president and administrator of the Willis-Knighton Medical Center. He also led human resources for 24 years and has served as the information security and privacy officer. He is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives and is a board member of the Willis-Knighton Health System Clinically Integrated Network. He has also been a member of the regulatory committee of the LHA and has been the president of the Willis-Knighton Federal Credit Union for the past 26 years. Within the community, he has been closely involved with the Northwest Louisiana Food Bank, having served in various capacities, including two years as chair, and he was a member of the North Louisiana Goodwill Industries board of directors, serving on its finance and contract labor committee. In addition, he served on the MLK Clinic board for five years. He is a member of University Church of Christ, where he is a deacon. A native and resident of Shreveport, he holds a Bachelor of Business Administration, Master of Business Administration from Abilene Christian University and a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from LSU Shreveport.

Chris Fox was re-elected as an at-large trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees. Fox joined LHC Group in 2016 and currently serves as division president-facility based services for LHC Group in Lafayette. He is responsible for the vision and direction of a division that includes long-term acute care hospitals, inpatient rehabilitation facilities, therapy and pharmacy services. Prior to joining the company, he served as vice president of sub-acute services for IASIS Healthcare, a national hospital operator. With more than 20 years of experience in the field, he previously held senior-level administrative positions with HealthSouth and RehabCare. A native of Louisiana, he is a graduate of Tulane University and holds a master’s degree from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He also serves on the executive committee of OneAcadiana, a nine-parish regional Chamber of Commerce organization.

David C. Jones was re-elected to serve as the Northwest district trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees. Jones is the administrator and CEO of North Caddo Medical Center, a critical access hospital that serves the rural areas of northern Caddo Parish. He came to North Caddo Medical Center as CEO in 2005 after 12 years of serving in administrative roles for Willis-Knighton Health System in Northwest Louisiana. During his leadership, North Caddo Medical Center has established four satellite rural health clinics, a dental practice, a community pharmacy and several other services. He has overseen the planning, construction, and opening of multiple projects, including the replacement medical center at the main campus, off-site family practice clinics, and various additions to accommodate hospital growth.

Christopher “Chris” Karam, FACHE, was re-elected to serve as the Central district trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees. Karam is the senior vice president (SVP) of group operations for CHRISTUS Health Louisiana and Southeast Texas. He has served in the role since September 2018. As SVP, he has oversight for all of the system’s ministries in Louisiana and Southeast Texas, including CHRISTUS St. Frances Cabrini Health System, CHRISTUS Shreveport-Bossier Health System, CHRISTUS Ochsner Health Southwestern Louisiana and CHRISTUS Southeast Texas Health System, making up more than 9,600 associates, 11 hospitals, five specialty facilities and more than 2,500 physicians and clinicians. He returned to Louisiana after serving as president and CEO of CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System in Texarkana, Texas, for the past 15 years. In total, he has more than 36 years of leadership in

Catholic Healthcare Ministry, having held a variety of clinical, operational and management positions in acute and rehabilitation hospitals across the country. In 2008, he was named one of the “24 Hospital Leaders to Know” by The Hospital Review and Beckers’ ASC Review and in 2009 was named one of “58 Hospital and Health Industry Leaders” by Hospital Review Magazine. In 2011, he was honored to be one of 300 “Most Influential People in Healthcare” selected out of 400,000 nominees by Modern Healthcare. He has a master’s degree in healthcare administration from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, a master’s degree with an emphasis in exercise physiology from Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, and a theology degree from St. Gregory University in Shawnee, Oklahoma. His early commitment to health and well-being was shaped by his bachelor’s degree in food and nutrition from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE).

Phyllis LeBlanc Peoples was elected to serve as the Bayou district trustee for LHA Board of Trustees. A native of Houma, Peoples is the president and CEO of Terrebonne General Health System and has worked in healthcare administration for more than 28 years. She currently serves on the board of the LHA Trust Funds and previously served as chair of the LHA Board of Trustees, LHA Research and Education Foundation board and the LHA Quality Committee. In addition, she has served as a member of the American Hospital Association Regional Policy Board 7 and has been a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives since 2001, completing a two-year term as president of the Louisiana Chapter of Healthcare Executives. She earned a bachelor’s degree in nursing from the University of Southwestern Louisiana, two master’s degrees from Valdosta State University in administration and education, and a master’s degree in healthcare administration from Tulane University.

Mary Ellen Pratt, FACHE, was elected as the chair-elect of the LHA Board of Trustees. Pratt is the CEO of St. James Parish Hospital, a critical access hospital located in Litcher. As a graduate of Tulane University with a Master of Health Administration, she started her career in the c-suite of academic medical centers and large community hospitals but has been dedicated to rural health for the past 15 years. Her leadership in rural healthcare is evidenced by her current service commitment as a member of the board of the National Rural Resource Center, and her previous participation on the American Hospital Association’s (AHA) Future of Rural Taskforce and as past chair of the AHA Small Rural Hospital Governing Council. At the state level, she serves on the boards of the Louisiana Rural Hospital Coalition and Louisiana Independent Hospital Network Coalition. She is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE) and the National Rural Health Association. She was named a top rural “CEO to Know” by Becker’s Review for six consecutive years from 2015-2020 and was named a 2020 AHA Most Valuable PAC Player.

Rene J. Ragas, FACHE, was elected to serve as treasurer for the LHA Board of Trustees. Ragas serves as president and chief executive officer of Woman’s Hospital in Baton Rouge. He is a Louisiana native with more than two decades of experience as a healthcare executive in the Baton Rouge area and surrounding regions. A Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE), he previously served as Northshore Market President for the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System. Additionally, he had executive oversight of Our Lady of the Angels Hospital, Our Lady of the Lake Surgical Hospital and Our Lady of the Lake Pontchartrain Surgery Center, as well as provided oversight to a network of more than 60 primary care and specialty physicians in the Northshore region. He received his Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences from Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond and earned his Master of Healthcare Administration from Tulane University in New Orleans in 2000. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and Baton Rouge

Health District. He is a graduate of Leadership Baton Rouge and Leadership Louisiana, and actively volunteers with the Louisiana Special Olympics.

Edgardo J. Tenreiro, FACHE, was re-elected as the Southeast district trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees. Tenreiro is the president and CEO of Baton Rouge General, serving previously as executive vice president and chief operating officer. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Politics, Philosophy and Economics as well as a Master of Business Administration in Finance from the University of Notre Dame. For nearly three decades, he has served in management roles for hospital systems in Florida, Texas, Illinois and Louisiana. Since joining Baton Rouge General in 2008, he has overseen many of the hospital's major functions, including physician relations, clinical quality, patient satisfaction, employee engagement and financial performance. He is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE) and a member of various boards, including the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and Baton Rouge Health District.

Kristin S. Wolkart, RN, FACHE, was elected as an at-large trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees. Wolkart's tenure with the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System (FMOLHS) began in 1995 at St. Elizabeth Hospital where she held various administrative-level positions including chief nursing officer and vice president of patient care services. In August 2007, she became the chief nursing information officer (CNIO) for the health system with a primary focus on streamlining electronic health record adoption strategies for clinicians across the health system to increase efficiency, quality and safety. Additionally, the CNIO role assisted hospital executives across the health system in achieving stage 1 meaningful use of electronic health records. In January 2013, she took on the role of director of special projects. In March 2014, she joined the team at St. Francis Medical Center in Monroe as the chief operating officer and became president and CEO in December of the same year. In May 2022, she stepped into the newly-created role of executive vice president and system chief nursing officer to lead efforts for best practices of care across the healthcare system. She has been a registered nurse since 1991 after graduating with her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from LSUMC School of Nursing in New Orleans. She received her master's in healthcare administration in 2004 from Kennedy-Western University. She is a board-certified Nurse Executive, Advanced through the American Nurses Credentialing Center. In 2010, she became a certified Green Belt in Six Sigma and a certified Project Management Professional through the Project Management Institute. In 2021, she earned her Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE).