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LOUISIANA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES BOARD OFFICERS, TRUSTEES

Baton Rouge — The Louisiana Hospital Association announced its 2023-2024 Board of Trustee officers and newly-elected board members during its annual membership meeting on July 24.

Mary Ellen Pratt, FACHE, CEO of St. James Parish Hospital in Lutcher, will serve as the LHA Board of Trustees chair. She received the gavel from **Greg C. Feirn, CPA**, CEO of LCMC Health in New Orleans, who will now serve as immediate past chair. **Rene J. Ragas, FACHE**, president and CEO of Woman's Hospital in Baton Rouge, will serve as the Association's chair-elect, and **Michele Kidd Sutton, FACHE**, president and CEO of North Oaks Health System in Hammond, was elected treasurer.

In addition to the officers, the LHA Board of Trustees is composed of at-large and district trustees. **Devon Hyde**, president and CEO of Lake Charles Memorial Health System, and **Dionne Viator, CPA, FACHE**, president and CEO of Iberia Medical Center in New Iberia, were elected as at-large trustees for a two-year term. **Stuart Archer, FACHE**, CEO of Oceans Healthcare, 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:

- **Northeast District: David Caston**, CEO of Reeves Memorial Medical Center in Bernice; and
- **Southwest District: Traci Thibodeaux, CMPE**, CEO of Beauregard Health System in Deridder.

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

- **Acadiana District: Kenneth Cochran, DSc, RN, FACHE**, president and CEO of Opelousas General Health System;
- **Bayou District: Phyllis Peoples**, president and CEO of Terrebonne General Health System in Houma; and
- **New Orleans District: Pete November, CPA**, CEO of Ochsner Health in New Orleans.

"The LHA is grateful to our new and returning board members, whose diverse expertise, leadership and collaborative spirit will strengthen our collective efforts to improve the health and well-being of all Louisianians," said LHA President and CEO Paul A. Salles. "These members continually strive to uphold the highest standards of patient care and promote innovation to advance the future of healthcare."

About the Louisiana Hospital Association

Established in 1926, the Louisiana Hospital Association is a non-profit organization representing hospitals and healthcare systems 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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[Pete November](#)
[Phyllis Peoples](#)
[Mary Ellen Pratt](#)

[Rene Ragas](#)
[Michele Sutton](#)
[Traci Thibodeaux](#)
[Dionne Viator](#)

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

- **Stuart Archer, FACHE, was re-elected to serve a second term as an at-large trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees.** As CEO of Oceans Healthcare, Archer leads the company's efforts to expand access to behavioral healthcare services in underserved communities around the country. Since joining the company in 2014, he has grown Oceans' behavioral health network to include 33 locations, including 23 inpatient hospital campuses across Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Archer has more than two decades of leadership experience in the post-acute care and behavioral health sectors. Prior to joining Oceans, he served as chief operating officer at LifeCare Management Services. He previously spent more than a decade as senior vice president of market development for LHC Group. In addition to serving on the Board of Trustees of the National Association for Behavioral Healthcare, Archer was named EY's Entrepreneur of The Year® 2018 in the Health category for the Southwest region. He earned an MBA from Louisiana State University and is a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives.
- **David Caston was elected to serve a two-year term as the Northeast district trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees.** Caston serves as the CEO of Reeves Memorial Medical Center, where he has led the organization since November of 2013. He has succeeded in a variety of hospital administrative positions, including vice president of clinical services at Lincoln General Hospital and assistant CEO of Northern Louisiana Medical Center. He also spent five years in senior-level management positions within the Veterans Health Administration, where he served on numerous national and regional committees. He earned a Master of Science in Healthcare Administration and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He received his undergraduate degree in business from Louisiana Tech University while also playing collegiate golf for two years. He is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives and the Medical Group Management Association. He is native of Louisiana and is very active within the community of Ruston. Caston's board memberships include Ashlar Medical, the American Association of Medical Administrators in Alabama, the Louisiana Tech University Alumni Association and the Ruston-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. In 2009, Caston was elected to serve as the vice chair of economic development for the Ruston-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. He serves as a deacon of his church and as chairman of the Missions Committee.
- **Kenneth Cochran, DSc, RN, FACHE, was re-elected to serve a two-year term as the Acadiana district trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees.** Cochran is a senior-level healthcare executive with more than 20 years of hospital experience, including diversified experience in clinical department management. He has extensive professional involvement in local, state and national level organizations, and has been recognized for exceptional skills in financial and operations management, regulatory compliance, clinical outcomes, and physician recruitment. Originally from the state of Alabama, Cochran is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and Board Certified in Healthcare Management. He received his Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Troy University and a Master of Business Administration from California State University. In 2015, Cochran earned his doctoral degree in Health Systems Leadership from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He also served as an orthopedic specialist and combat flight medic in the U.S. Army Reserves for eight years. Cochran has served as president and CEO of Opelousas General Health System since July 1, 2015. Currently, he serves as the Louisiana Regent for the American College of Healthcare Executives, as a board member for the Louisiana State Nurses Association and on the LHA Committee on Hospital Payment Reform.

- **Devon Hyde was elected to serve a two-year term as an at-large trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees.** He has served as president and CEO of Lake Charles Memorial Health System since April 12, 2021. He came to Memorial with 15 years of executive healthcare management experience, having led both for-profit and not-for-profit hospitals and medical centers throughout the nation. He served as the CEO of Presbyterian Hospital, the largest acute care hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Prior to that position, he was the CEO at AllianceHealth Deaconess in Oklahoma City, and the chief operating officer at Hillcrest Medical Center in Tulsa and Valley Hospital Medical Center in Las Vegas, respectively. He has a degree in business administration from the University of Oklahoma and a Master of Business Administration from Oklahoma City University. He is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives and the Institute of Healthcare Executives and Suppliers.
- **Pete November, CPA, was re-elected to serve a two-year term as the New Orleans district trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees.** November serves as the CEO of Ochsner Health, Louisiana's largest not-for-profit academic health system and its largest private employer. Prior to being named CEO, he served as executive vice president and chief financial officer at Ochsner, leading accounting, financial planning and analysis, reimbursement, revenue cycle and financial operations for the system. In this role, he also oversaw the information services, real estate, supply chain, and partnerships and integration teams. A champion of the use of innovation and technology in healthcare, November previously served as Ochsner's executive vice president of digital health and chief administrative officer. In 2018, he spearheaded the development of Ochsner LSU Health System of North Louisiana. November joined Ochsner in 2012 as senior vice president, general counsel, and chief compliance officer. Prior to joining Ochsner, he served as executive vice president, general counsel and head of acquisitions for LHC Group Inc. Prior to LHC Group, he was an equity partner with Alston & Bird, an international law firm. He is a graduate with a degree in accounting from the University of Kentucky and received his juris doctorate at the University of Kentucky College of Law. He is a Certified Public Accountant, is actively involved in the community, serves as an Adjunct Professor and Guest Lecturer at Loyola University College of Business, was a member of Gov. John Bel Edwards' Healthcare Transition Team and serves on the Board of Trustees for the National World War II Museum.
- **Phyllis Peoples was re-elected to serve a two-year term as the Bayou district trustee for the 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, on the LHA Foundation board and on 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, will serve as the LHA Board of Trustees chair for the 2023-2024 term.** 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 16 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 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 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 will serve as chair-elect of the LHA Board of Trustees for the 2023-2024 term.** Ragas serves as president and CEO of Woman’s Hospital. 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, 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.
- Michele Kidd Sutton, FACHE, was elected treasurer for the LHA Board of Trustees.** Sutton is in her seventh year as president and CEO of North Oaks Health System and is a 36-year employee of the organization. Under her tutelage, the North Oaks medical staff has grown from 100 to 400-plus providers. Board certified in healthcare management as a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Sutton served as an ACHE Regent for Louisiana from 2015 to 2018 and on the Board of Governors from 2020-2023. She has been a member of the LHA since 1988, where she has served on numerous committees, including as the current chair of its political action committee, HOSPPAC. She also serves on the Board of Directors of the LHA Trust Funds. In addition, Gov. John Bel Edwards appointed her to serve on the Louisiana Emergency Response Network Commission representing service district hospitals. Other organizations for which Sutton is actively involved include: the Northshore Business Council; the New Orleans Chapter of the Women’s Healthcare Executive Network; Rotary Club of Hammond, for which she is past president; Southeastern’s Alumni Association, for which she is a lifetime member and past board member; the Lions Athletic Association, for which she is immediate past president and on the board of directors; and the Tangipahoa Chamber, having served as board chairman in 1991, a member of the board of directors for a total of 7 years, as treasurer twice, as an advisor and in numerous committee chairperson roles since 1985. In July of 2022, she was the recipient of the American Hospital Association Grassroots Champion Award, and in 2019, the Southeastern Alumni Association honored her as Alumna of the Year. In 2020, Southeastern Baseball presented her with the Lion for Life Award, while Northshore Technical and Community College honored her with the 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award and 2020 Chancellor’s Award for College Advancement. Other accolades include recognition in 2007 as a “Woman of the Year” by New Orleans City Business and as one of the “Most Influential Women in Tangipahoa Parish” by The Daily Star. She earned both a bachelor’s degree in marketing and a master’s degree in business administration from Southeastern Louisiana University.
- Traci Thibodeaux, CMPE, was elected to serve a two-year term as the Southwest district trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees.** Thibodeaux is CEO of Beauregard Health System, a 49-bed, acute care hospital in DeRidder. Prior to BHS, she served as the director of Lourdes Physician Group, the vice president of Lourdes Physician Group and Ambulatory Services, and the vice president of the orthopedic and neurosurgery service lines at Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center in Lafayette. Prior to Lourdes, she was with Cardiovascular Institute of the South, Fresenius Medical Care and Siemen’s Health Services. She joined the staff at BHS in June of 2017 as the vice president of physician and support services, as part of a structured succession plan. In this position, her responsibilities included oversight and operations of Beauregard Physician Group, laboratory, radiology, nutritional services, environmental services and plant operations. In April of 2019, she was promoted to the position of chief operating officer and assumed the additional responsibility of nursing services. She has a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and a Master of Healthcare Administration from Our Lady of the Lake College

in Baton Rouge. Additionally, she is a Certified Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, a Certified Medical Practice Executive, a Certified Emergenetics Instructor, a Certified Rural Health Chief Executive Officer, a member of the Medical Group Management Association and a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

- **Dionne Viator, CPA, was elected to serve a two-year term as an at-large trustee for the LHA Board of Trustees.** Viator is president and CEO of Iberia Medical Center, a Hospital Service District No.1 provider with two hospital campuses and multiple provider clinics. A Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives and Certified Public Accountant, she has 30 years of extensive hands-on healthcare experience. Prior to her employment at Iberia Medical Center, she was executive vice president, chief financial officer and treasurer at the Lafayette-based LHC Group, Inc. She also gained significant financial and operations experience during her 21-year tenure at Baton Rouge General as CFO/executive vice president and chief strategy & network development officer. Viator's vast healthcare leadership roles include serving on multiple LHA committees, including the Finance and Oversight Committee and the Legislative, Regulatory & Policy Council. She has also served on numerous other boards and committees, including service as vice chair of the Louisiana American College of Healthcare Executives, ACHE Regent Advisory Committee, Louisiana Society of CPAs Ethics Committee, Greater Iberia Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Iberia Industrial Development Foundation Board, Baton Rouge Rehabilitation Hospital Board, Louisiana Healthcare Alliance Board, Louisiana Business Group on Health Board and the Louisiana Healthcare Quality Forum Board. In addition, Viator was appointed by Gov. Kathleen Blanco to sit on the Louisiana Patient Compensation Fund Board. She has received the Baton Rouge Chamber Community Leadership Award, Baton Rouge Influential Women in Business Award, Louisiana Society of CPAs Outstanding CPA in Business and Industry, and the "Woman of Distinction" by the Girl Scouts of Louisiana. Viator received her Bachelor of Science in Accounting from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She is a graduate of the prestigious Wharton School of Business Executive Development Program. In addition to her CPA designation, she has earned the Chartered Global Management Accountant designation for advanced proficiency in accounting.