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LT. GOVERNOR LANDRIEU AND STATE MUSEUM BOARD ANNOUNCE NEW STATE MUSEUM DIRECTOR AFTER INTERNATIONAL SEARCH

*Sam Rykels Named to the Post;
Curatorial Expert Brings Leadership and Continuity to the System*

New Orleans, La. – Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu and the Louisiana State Museum Board of Directors today announced the appointment of Sam Rykels as the new Director of the Louisiana State Museum.

Samuel Gordon Rykels, 56, was chosen for the position following an international search by the Louisiana State Museum Board's Selection Committee. Rykels began his 18-year career at the Louisiana State Museum as an exhibits curator and rose through the ranks to become Director of Interpretive Services in 2000. Rykels takes the reins from interim Director Robert Wheat, who has headed the Museum for the past eight months.

"Sam Rykels brings with him an intimate understanding of how our State Museum works," said Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu, who oversees the State Museum. "His wealth of experience will guide the continued transformation of our state's museums into vibrant cultural centers - places that attract visitors from across the globe and create jobs here in Louisiana."

"Along with the Board, I look forward to working with Sam Rykels," said State Museum Board President Rosemary Ewing. "Sam brings experience as well as a proven record of understanding and expertise. The future of the State Museum, like all museums, will be challenged by rough economic storms. Sam has a record of weathering storms and protecting the treasures and archives of our museums. The Board of Directors and I look forward to having him lead and steady our direction for the future.

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About the Selection Process

Lt. Governor Landrieu directed the Board of Directors to form a Selection Committee to identify nominees for the position of Director of the Louisiana State Museum. The Selection Committee

conducted an international search, soliciting applications from highly experienced museum professionals throughout the country and abroad.

“The selection process for the new Director was excellent,” said Michael M. Davis, Secretary of the Louisiana State Museum Board and member of the Selection Committee. “Lt. Governor Landrieu charged us to find the best possible candidate for the position, and I think we’ve done that. Sam Rykels brings long experience with the State Museum, and his leadership will be necessary as the Museum faces upcoming budget cuts.”

More than 20 candidates applied for the position, and a rigorous vetting process for professional qualifications by the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism narrowed the field to eight. The Museum Board’s Selection Committee reviewed the applications for the remaining candidates, choosing five applicants for further consideration. Following further meetings, the Selection Committee invited three candidates to interview for the position.

After an exhaustive interview process, the Selection Committee recommended two candidates for the position to Lt. Governor Landrieu, who met with each of the finalists.

“We are excited about Mr. Rykels and about the direction the museum is headed,” said Dr. Ralph Lupin, State Museum Board and Selection Committee Member. “I’m looking forward to the new steps the director will take to lead the State Museum into the future.”

About Sam Rykels

A design specialist, Rykels has played a key role in numerous State Museum exhibitions, including *Mardi Gras: It’s Carnival Time in Louisiana* at the Presbytere and two major permanent exhibitions at the Louisiana State Museum - Baton Rouge. After Hurricane Katrina, he spearheaded efforts to recover and protect more than 200,000 artifacts from damaged Museum properties.

Rykels also reassembled dispersed staff members to open the Baton Rouge museum less than six months after the hurricanes of 2005.

“I’m honored to be chosen for this position,” said Rykels. “I look forward to working with the Lt. Governor and the State Museum Board and support organizations to make the Louisiana State Museum a world-class institution.”

Raised on a cattle ranch in the Dutch community of Amsterdam, Montana, Rykels received his B.A. in fine arts from Montana State University. After earning an M.F.A. in sculpture from Florida State

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University in 1982, he began an exhibit and architectural specialty design firm in Dallas, Texas. In 1987, he moved to Baton Rouge, where he constructed exhibits for the Department of Anthropology and Geography at Louisiana State University. Rykels’ work at LSU with anthropologist Jay Edwards

and other scholars inspired his passion for Louisiana's history and culture. He has been a resident of New Orleans since 1991, when he began working at the Museum.

About the Louisiana State Museum

The Louisiana State Museum has seen many recent successes, including nationally renowned exhibitions *Gold, Let Your Motto Be Resistance*, and *From Tramps to Kings: 100 Years of Zulu*, now open at the Cabildo.

The Museum also announced a partnership with the National Park Service to create a jazz museum and performance venue at the Old U.S. Mint, scheduled to open in spring 2010. Other ongoing Museum projects and initiatives also include the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame in Natchitoches, currently under construction, a planned Katrina exhibit at the Presbytere in New Orleans, and educational partnerships that have served more than 30,000 students.

"The Louisiana State Museum is an important part of our state's booming cultural economy. We are working with public and private partners to create world-class institutions right here in Louisiana," said Lt. Governor Landrieu. "We are transforming our museums into hubs of social activity, creating cultural and educational opportunities for visitors and residents alike."

The Louisiana State Museum, a complex of national landmarks housing thousands of artifacts and works of art reflecting Louisiana's legacy of historic events and cultural diversity, is part of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, which is overseen by Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu. The Museum network includes properties in New Orleans' French Quarter: the Cabildo, Presbytere, 1850 House, Old U.S. Mint and Madame John's Legacy. Other sites include museums in Baton Rouge, Natchitoches, Patterson and Thibodaux. For more information about the Louisiana State Museum please call 800.568.6968 or visit <http://lsm.crt.state.la.us>.

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