

# IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
RAPIDES AMERICAN JOB CENTER

FALL 2023



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## Executive Director's Corner



The Rapides Workforce Development Board is continuously working together collectively to meet the needs of job seekers and businesses. As Rapides Workforce Development Board 61, we are determined in our mission to help Rapides Parish residents get to work by providing funding and supportive services for classroom training and on-the-job-training, along with paying for supportive services and hosting frequent hiring events in collaboration with local businesses and community partners. If you are interested in learning more about any of our Business Services, please contact our Business Service Representative, Eric Irby at 318-487-5547.

Each year, we strive and continue to improve our outreach to residents in need. We are just concluding our Summer Youth Program where 19 students were introduced to work experience tailored to their interest levels. They all successfully completed the program.

We are also excited about our new \$300,000 grant awarded and funded through The Rapides Foundation called Youth Empowerment Services (YES). This grant is geared to recruit and help students ages 16-24, who are not working and not going to school. We are proud to say that we have built a strong rapport and partnership with several area businesses and community resources over a very short time span, and we are looking forward to making an even greater impact in the near future. If you know of a student in need of assistance, please reach out to our Service Navigator, Caitlinn Wolff, at 318-487-5638.

This newsletter continues to serve as an important collaboration tool within our community. If you have any news or information to share about your organization, please do send it to [nhill@lsua.edu](mailto:nhill@lsua.edu).

As always, thanks for your support and love for our community and your commitment to helping it thrive and continue to grow.

*Sharon Neal*

Executive Director  
 Rapides American Job Center

## Rapides Workforce Development Board

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Connie Baker, Vice-Chair  
Cynthia Baker  
Karyn Barrett  
Cyndi Szczepanski  
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Chad Bynog  
Sally Cowan  
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Leona Venson  
Tim Dousay  
Rich Dupre  
Paul Fusilier  
Larry George  
Bill Higgins  
Valerie Aymond  
Ginger Humbles  
Paula Johnson  
Kashawna Jones  
Jeff Johnson  
Haywood Joiner  
Twanda Hamilton  
Steve Bryant  
Donald LaCombe  
Gary Nugent  
Kevin Hood  
Lloyd Price  
Jeff Ryan  
Jimmy Sawtelle  
Nolan Spillers  
Sara Stokes  
Cindy Sayes  
Shanna Worth  
Charlie Dupont  
Deborah Randolph

## Gov. Edwards Celebrates Record-Low July Unemployment, Appoints New Secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission

According to data released on August 18th by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), Louisiana's unemployment rate fell to 3.4% in July, the lowest rate ever for the month, beating out July 2022's then-record 3.5%. Governor John Bel Edwards issued a statement celebrating this record and announcing James 'Robert' Wooley as the new secretary of the LWC. Wooley will replace Ava Dejoie Cates, who will resign as secretary on August 31, 2023.

"Our hard, bipartisan work to grow and diversify our economy and create jobs is paying off," said Gov. Edwards. "I want to once again thank departing LWC Secretary Ava Cates, who has overseen regularly record-breaking employment figures as Louisiana comes back strong from devastating hurricanes and the COVID pandemic. I am confident that LWC is in good hands with new Secretary Robert Wooley. He has a long career in public service, including his recent role as LWC's assistant secretary of the Unemployment Insurance Administration through the most difficult days of COVID."

[full story here](#)

## SunGas Renewables Chooses Rapides Parish for Proposed \$1.8 Billion Clean Fuel Facility

SunGas Renewables, an independent division of GTI Energy, announced it is considering an investment of approximately \$1.8 billion to establish a renewable low-carbon methanol production facility in Rapides Parish. The company projects its Pineville facility, Beaver Lake Renewable Energy (BLRE), would manufacture nearly 400,000 metric tons of green methanol per year for SunGas customers worldwide.

If the project moves forward as outlined, the company expects to create 109 new direct jobs with an average annual salary of more than \$78,000. SunGas also anticipates the creation of about 1,150 construction jobs at peak construction. Louisiana Economic Development estimates the project would result in an additional 390 new indirect jobs, for a total of 499 new jobs in central Louisiana.

[full story here](#)



## LWDA 61 Allied Organizations/Agencies

RoyOMartin  
Acadian Ambulance Service  
Boise Cascade  
Gilchrist Construction, Co.  
Christus St. Francis Cabrini  
Stella Jones  
Crest Industries  
Dousay Costum Homes  
Plastipak Packaging, LLC  
Procter and Gamble  
Southern Administrative Svcs  
AFCO  
CLECO  
Sayes Office Supply  
Union Tank Car Co.  
First Federal Bank  
Rapides Regional Medical Ctr.  
Courtyard by Marriot  
Cenla CAC  
Plumbers LU 247  
Rapides APrish School Board  
Dept. of Veterans Affairs  
LA Youth Challenge  
AFL -CIO  
CLTCC  
Rapides Federation of Teachers  
LSUA  
LRS  
England Economic & Industrial  
Development District  
LWC  
DCFS  
City of Pineville  
K&L, LLC  
Central LA Regional Chamber  
of Commerce

## Louisiana Unemployment Rate Lowest in Series History

Data released yesterday by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that Louisiana continues to set unemployment records.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for August 2023 is 3.3 percent, the lowest rate in series history. The rate shows a decrease of 0.1 percentage points from the July 2023 figure of 3.4 percent and decreased by 0.2 percentage points from the August 2022 figure of 3.5 percent.



Image credit: LWC

The number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals for August 2023 is estimated to be 68,814, also a new series record low. Since July 2023, the number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals has decreased by 2,014. Compared to August 2022, the number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals decreased by 4,653.

The number of seasonally adjusted employed individuals for August 2023 is 2,025,507. The number of employed saw a loss of 6,973 individuals from the July 2023 revised estimate of 2,032,480. When compared to August 2022, the number of seasonally adjusted employed individuals increased by 18,548. This is the 29 th consecutive month with an over-the-year gain in the number of employed.

[full story here](#)

## Initial Unemployment Insurance Claims Drop for Week ending September 9

The initial unemployment insurance claims for the week ending September 9, 2023, dropped to 1,384 from the week ending September 2, 2023, a total of 1,423. For a comparison, during the week ending September 10, 2022, 1,489 initial claims were filed.

The four-week moving average of initial claims decreased to 1,629 from the previous week's average of 1,757. The unemployment insurance continued claims for the week ending September 9, 2023, decreased to 13,116 from the week ending September 2, 2023, a total of 13,657. The continued claims were above the comparable figure of 10,993 for the week ending September 10, 2022.

[full story here](#)

## LSUA Smashes Ambitious Enrollment Goal Two Years Ahead of Schedule with 5,104 Students for Fall 2023

**LSUA** In a remarkable demonstration of growth and commitment to excellence, Louisiana State University of Alexandria (LSUA) is thrilled to announce that it has surpassed its ambitious goal of enrolling 5,000 undergraduate students by 2025, a full two years ahead of schedule. As of the Fall 2023 semester, the university proudly serves 5,104 students, further cementing its status as the fastest-growing public university in Louisiana.



Photo Credit: LSUA Strategic Communications

LSUA has bucked the trend of a nationwide downturn in undergraduate enrollments. The Fall 2023 enrollment figures reveal an unprecedented 24% increase compared to the previous year, translating to a net growth of 993 students. This surge includes a nearly 6% uptick in on-campus enrollments and a nearly 40% rise in students opting for 100% online programs. Students transferring to LSUA from other institutions increased by an incredible 49.2% over last year.

The enrollment of first-time freshmen, generally including recent high school graduates aged 18-21, increased by 17%. This year's freshmen class of 475 marks the 3rd largest since admission standards were increased in 2007 and is the largest in the last eight years. Moreover, the class of 2027 comes in with the highest average ACT composite and highest high school GPA of all time.

[full story here](#)

## Become a part of LSUA Team!

Are you passionate about making a difference in higher education? Do you want to have a positive impact on the lives of students and the entire LSUA community? Then look no further than joining the LSUA team!

LSUA is looking for dedicated individuals who share their commitment to excellence and mission to provide a transformative educational experience. By joining LSUA team, you can help shape the future of higher education and make a lasting impact on the lives of countless students.

Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to be part of something truly special. Apply now to join the LSUA team and make a difference in higher education! Discover various opportunities at LSU of Alexandria by visiting [here](#).



Photo Credit: LSUA Strategic Communications

### Partner Organizations

#### On-site

**LCTCS - Adult Education and Family Literacy Act**  
(318) 487-5443

**Louisiana Rehabilitation Services**  
(318) 487-5335

**National Association for Hispanic Elderly**  
(318) 221-7611

**Institute for Indian Devt., Inc.**  
(985) 851-5408

**Job Corps Center Alexandria**  
(318) 487-6773 x102

**LWC- Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)**  
(225) 342-7679

**LWC - Wagner-Peyser**  
(318) 487-5532

**WIOA Adult/Dislocated Worker & Youth**  
(318) 767-6030

**Cenla Community Action Committee, Inc.**  
(318) 314-3480

#### Off-site

**LTCCS - Career & Technical Education Programs**  
(225) 922-2809

**LWC - Trade Adjustment Asstc. (TAA)**  
(318) 487-5539

**Alexandria Housing Authority**  
(318) 442-8843  
**Rapides Housing Authority**  
(318) 793-4751

**LWC - Unemployment Insurance**  
(225) 342-2905

**Native American Programs**  
(985) 851-5408

**DCFS - Temporary Assistc. for Needy Families (TANF)**  
(318) 362-3471

**National Farm Worker Program**  
318-362-3024; 318-435-8885  
1-844-385-1919 ext: 7020

## RoyOMartin WoodWorks Program Provides Pathway to Career Success



Students from 10 high schools across Central Louisiana recently attended the WoodWorks program orientation session at RoyOMartin corporate office in Alexandria. They were given an overview of the industry-based training program, as well as information on RoyOMartin's history, products, and career opportunities.

Now in its 17th year, WoodWorks is currently offered in 17 central Louisiana and 4 east Texas high schools. The program offers a custom-designed curriculum that covers topics such as applied mathematics, industrial safety, and employability skills. Throughout the year, they receive classroom instruction from their teachers and guidance from RoyOMartin WoodWorks mentors. Additionally, they tour the manufacturing plants, interview with company representatives, and earn a certification upon successful completion of the course.

With the WoodWorks certification and high-school diploma, these students have the opportunity to sign on to RoyOMartin's apprenticeship program. This next step provides them with training courses they will need as they transition into their full-time employment roles at the three RoyOMartin manufacturing facilities.

RoyOMartin look forward to working with these students and teacher sponsors throughout the upcoming school year!



Glenmora High School



Peabody Magnet High School

Photo credit: RoyOMartin

## Make a Great Start with RoyOMartin

When your strengths meet RoyOMartin opportunities, great things can happen. Work and learn from the best in the industry, in a fulfilling career with exceptional benefits.

Check out RoyOMartin career opportunities [here](#).

Source: Amanda Guillot

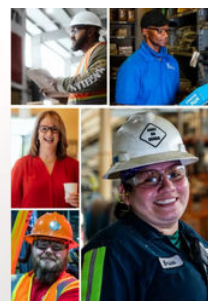


Photo credit: RoyOMartin

### Community Partners



**Louisiana Workforce Commission**  
(318) 487-5532



**Rapides Parish Police Jury**  
(318) 473-6660



**LSU of Alexandria**  
(318) 473-6417



**Central Louisiana Community College**  
(318) 487-5443



**The Rapides Foundation**  
(318) 443-3394



**Central Louisiana Regional Chamber of Commerce**  
(318) 442-6671



**Rapides Parish School Board**  
(318) 487-0888



**Dept. of Veterans Affairs**  
(318) 466-2429



**LA Youth Challenge**  
(318) 290-5487



**Rapides Federation of Teachers**  
(318) 442-2727

### Helpful Organizations for Employers



**US Department of Labor**



**Louisiana Workforce Commission**



**Central LA Regional Chamber of Commerce**



**Louisiana Small Business Development Center**



**Secretary of State**



**Rapides Sales & Use Tax Department**



**Employer.gov**

Click the logo to access the organization's website



### Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC)

WOTC is one tool in a diverse toolbox of flexible strategies designed to help move people into gainful employment and obtain on-the-job experience. It joins other tax credits, education, and workforce training and development programs that help American workers with barriers to employment prepare for good jobs; ease their transition from job to job; benefit from the creation of effective regional economic development strategies; and create high performance workplaces.

For more information, [click here](#).

### Fidelity Bonding

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) offers bonding services for hard-to-place job seekers under the Fidelity Bonding Program. The federal bonding program provides insurance to employers that protects against employee dishonesty and acts as an incentive to hire at-risk applicants, including Returning Citizens (ex-offenders). Fidelity Bonding covers theft, forgery, larceny and embezzlement. Bond insurance issued ranges from \$5,000 - \$25,000 for a 6-month period with **no deductible**. The bond can be issued to employers once the applicant has received a job offer with a scheduled start date.

For more information, [click here](#).

## Louisiana Central 's Progress in Workforce Development



Healthcare Career Central's social media pages are now live! Louisiana Central is dedicated to supporting the next generation in our region, providing them with the tools and knowledge to become successful healthcare professionals in our region through this innovative initiative. Healthcare Career Central's goal is to connect middle school and high school students with educational resources, exploratory programs, and opportunities in the healthcare field. Through the website, social media campaigns, and community events, Healthcare Career Central links students, parents, guardians, teachers, and counselors with local employers, training providers, and other partners. Follow Healthcare Career Central on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#) for tips, tools, and updates on the upcoming website launch. This project is funded by a Future of HealthC.A.R.E. Program Grant from The Rapides Foundation.



Throughout the month of October, Louisiana Central will be celebrating Manufacturing Month by showcasing events happening at our regional manufacturing companies, discussing educational and career opportunities, and highlighting the impact of this industry on our region, including new jobs and new investments entering our area. Stay informed by following Louisiana Central's social media pages. ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)).



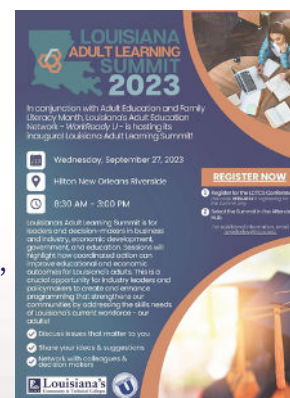
Learn more about Louisiana Central at [www.louisiana-central.com](http://www.louisiana-central.com).

Source: Britni Lilley, Louisiana Central

## Louisiana Adult Learning Summit 2023

In conjunction with Adult Education and Family Literacy Month, Louisiana's Adult Education Network - *WorkReady U* - is hosting its inaugural Louisiana Adult Learning Summit on September 27, 2023, at Hilton New Orleans Riverside.

Louisiana's Adult Learning Summit is for leaders and decision-makers makers in business and industry, economic development, government, and education. Sessions will highlight how coordinated action can improve educational and economic outcomes for Louisiana's adults. This is a crucial opportunity for industry leaders and policymakers to create and enhance programming that strengthens our communities by addressing the skills needs of Louisiana's current workforce - our adults!

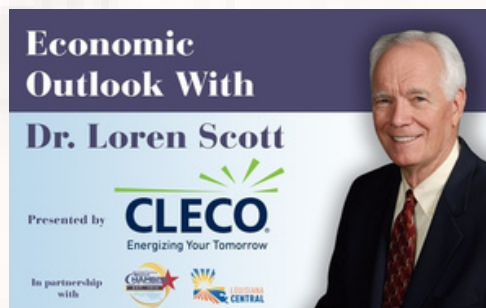


For additional information, email [angeladay@lctcs.edu](mailto:angeladay@lctcs.edu).

Source: Jennifer Freeman, LCTCS

## Central Louisiana Economic Outlook with Dr. Loren Scott

The Central Louisiana Economic Outlook for 2023-24 by Dr. Loren Scott, presented by Cleco in partnership with the Central Louisiana Regional Chamber of Commerce and Louisiana Central will be held on October 5, 2023, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Country Inn and Suites in Pineville, LA.



Dr. Scott's much anticipated annual report will include a regional perspective on trends and events affecting the central Louisiana economy, providing valuable information for business leaders planning for 2023-24 and beyond.

Dr. Scott is the president and founder of Loren C. Scott and Associates, Inc. He is a Professor Emeritus of Economics at LSU and is the co-founder of the Louisiana econometric model used for providing annual forecasts of the Louisiana economy.

For more information, you may call the Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce at 318-442-6671 or reserve your table or tickets [here](#).

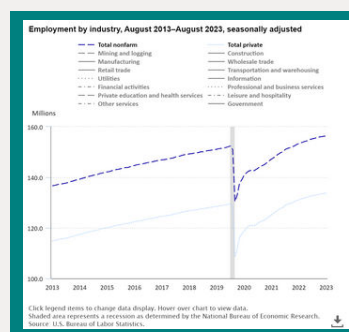
## Payroll employment up by 187,000 in August 2023



Total U.S. nonfarm payroll employment was 156.4 million in August 2023, reflecting an increase of 187,000 compared with the previous month, as employment in health care, leisure and hospitality, social assistance, and construction continued to trend up. The total nonfarm payroll employment increase is less than the average monthly increase of 271,000 over the prior 12 months.

Employment in private education and health services increased by 102,000 in August, repeating similar July gains. Ambulatory health care services, nursing and residential care facilities, and hospitals added jobs over the month.

Leisure and hospitality employment continued to trend up in August by 40,000 jobs, totaling 16.7 million, below the average 61,000 jobs per month gain over the prior 12 months. Employment in leisure and hospitality continues to remain below its pre-pandemic February 2020 level by 290,000 jobs, or 1.7 percent.



[full report here](#)

### Community Resources

#### Food Assistance

**Cenla Community Action Committee**  
(318) 314-3480

**The Food Bank of Central Louisiana**  
(318) 445-2773

**First Baptist Church Pineville**  
(318) 448-8221

**Louisiana Housing Assistance Corporation**  
*The Child and Adult Care Food Program*  
(318) 623-0795; (337) 298-5666

**Rapides Parish Food Stamp Office**  
(318) 487-5111; 1-888-524-3578

**The Salvation Army Alexandria**  
(318) 442-0445

#### Housing Services

**Alexandria Housing Authority**  
(318) 442-8843 Ext 214

**Central Louisiana Homeless Coalition**  
(318) 443-0500

**Pineville Housing Authority**  
(318) 473-9729

**Rapides Parish Housing Authority**  
(318) 793-4751

#### Utility Assistance

**Cenla Community Action Committee**  
(318) 314-3480

**Philadelphia Baptist Church**  
(318) 443-3692

#### Employment Training Services

**Rapides American Job Center**  
(318) 767-6030

**The Orchard Foundation – Cenla Work Ready**  
(318) 767-6560

[Click here](#)  
to view more list of  
community resources



# Labor Market Information

## Unemployment Data By Parish

Allen Parish - 4.0%  
 Avoyelles Parish - 4.1%  
 Catahoula Parish - 4.3%  
 Concordia Parish - 4.5%  
 Grant Parish - 3.4 %  
 La Salle Parish - 2.9%  
 Natchitoches Parish- 4.2%  
 Rapides Parish - 3.0%  
 Vernon Parish - 4.2%  
 Winn Parish - 3.7%

*Unemployment Data by  
 Parishes for August 2023.  
 Preliminary (not seasonally  
 adjusted) Source: LWC - LMS,  
 Local Area Unemployment  
 Statistics Program)*

## Job Openings Advertised online in Cenla by Parishes

Allen Parish - 137  
 Avoyelles Parish - 205  
 Catahoula Parish - 28  
 Concordia - 157  
 Grant Parish - 43  
 La Salle Parish - 61  
 Natchitoches Parish - 307  
 Rapides Parish - 2,896  
 Vernon Parish - 410  
 Winn Parish - 63

*This data above shows the  
 distribution number of job  
 openings advertised online in  
 Central Louisiana by parishes on  
 Sept. 18, 2023*

*Source: LWC-  
 Online advertised jobs data*



## Latest Unemployment Rates

	August 2023	July 2023	June 2023
<b>Rapides Parish</b> (not seasonally adjusted)	3.0%	3.5%	4.0%
<b>Louisiana</b> (seasonally adjusted)	3.3%	3.6%	3.6%
<b>United States</b> (seasonally adjusted)	3.8%	3.7%	3.6%

Source: BLS & LWC Louisiana Occupational Information System

## Occupations with the Highest Number of Job Openings Advertised in Alexandria, MSA

Registered Nurses -284  
 Physicians, All Other -119  
 LPN & LVN - 75  
 Critical Care Nurses - 55  
 Retail Salespersons - 44  
 Manager, All Other - 30  
 First Line Spv. of Food Prep. &  
 Serving Workers - 29  
 Fastfood&Counter Workers - 26  
 Costumer Service Rep. - 24  
 Respiratory Therapists - 24

*Source: LWC Online advertised jobs  
 data: Sept. 18, 2023*

## Industries with Highest Job Openings Advertised Online in Alexandria, LA MSA

Rank	Industry	Job Openings
1	Health Care and Social Assistance	600
2	Educational Services	536
3	Retail Trade	240
4	Public Administration	208
5	Management of Companies & Enterprises	195
6	Accommodation and Food Services	158
7	Administrative and Support & Waste Management and Remediation Services	112
8	Manufacturing	77
9	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	44
10	Unclassified	548

The table above shows the top ten job openings advertised online  
 for the industries selected in Alexandria, LA Metropolitan Statistical  
 Area on Sept. 18, 2023.

Source: LWC Online advertised jobs data.

## Top 15 Largest Employers in Alexandria LA, MSA

Pinecrest Developmental Ctr  
 Rapides Women's-Children Hsp  
 Rapides Regional Medical Ctr  
 CHRISTUS St Frances Cabrini  
 Chief of Staff  
 Crest Operations LLC  
 Alexandria VA Hospital Med. Ctr  
 Sheriff's Department  
 Walmart Supcntr - Monroe Hwy  
 Walmart Supercenter - N Mall Dr.  
 Sheriff's Dept. - Jail  
 Crest Industries  
 Cleoco Corp Holdings LLC  
 Boise Cascade Co  
 Walmart Supercenter - C.Blvd.

*Source: Louisiana Workforce  
 Commission*



## About the Rapides American Job Center

The Rapides American Job Center (RAJC) brings "those who need jobs" and "those who need employees" together.

The Rapides Parish American Job Center is a comprehensive AJC that includes the mandatory WIOA partners on-site offering an integrated array of quality services so that job seekers and businesses can conveniently find the help they need under one roof such as scholarship training, training referrals, career counseling, job listings, and other employment-related services for both jobseekers and employers.

Established under the Workforce Investment Act and reauthorized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014 (WIOA), American Job Centers (AJCs) are at the heart of the workforce investment system.

The Rapides Workforce Development Board 61 is charged by the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to certify the Rapides American Job Center, as a comprehensive One-Stop Center.

### We thank and acknowledge our Contributors!

Rapides AJC - Sharon Neal  
Office of the Governor  
LWC - Regine Williams  
LED - Mark Lorando  
Louisiana Central - Britni Lilley  
LSUA - Adam Lord, Lynette Burlew  
RoyOMartin - Amanda Guillot  
Louisiana Workforce Commission  
Central LA Regional Chamber of Commerce -  
Deborah Randolph  
LCTCS - Jennifer Freeman  
Bureau of Labor Statistics,  
U.S. Department of Labor, *The Economics Daily*

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Rapides American Job Center  
One-Stop Operator



James Wooley, Secretary

## Rapides American Job Center

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Mon - Fri 8:00am - 4:30 pm



Joseph Bishop, President



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