

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS

Secretary Gary Westcott

Date: July 18, 2025

Contact: Tiffany Dickerson at DOCcommunications@la.gov

Longtime Undersecretary Thomas Bickham to Retire

Jamie Lee to serve as Acting Undersecretary

Baton Rouge, LA - The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPS&C) announced today the retirement of Undersecretary Thomas C. Bickham, III after more than three decades of exemplary service to the State of Louisiana.

Bickham's gubernatorial appointment as Undersecretary of the Department occurred in June 2008. In this highly complex leadership position, he was responsible for \$970.5 million budget with \$766.5 million for DPS&C - Correctional Services and \$204 million for local housing, reentry service, and justice reinvestment.

"After 32 plus years of service, with over 25 years as an Undersecretary across five administrations, this is the point in time where my path pivots," said Thomas Bickham, undersecretary, Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections. "It has been an honor and a privilege to have worked alongside so many dedicated civil servant throughout my time in state government."

Bickham, a graduate of Mississippi State University who earned a Bachelor of Science in Nuclear Engineering, began his state civil service career journey in January 1993 at the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ). He was appointed to serve as Undersecretary by Governors Mike Foster (LDEQ), Kathleen Blanco (LDEQ), Bobby Jindal, John Bel Edwards and Jeff Landry.

"During Undersecretary Thomas Bickham's tenure, he strengthened the Department's budget, secured several pay increases for correctional professionals, transformed operations, expanded technology, and fostered innovation," said Gary Westcott, secretary, Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections. "His noteworthy contributions have set the standard, which will leave a lasting and positive mark on the Department."

Bickham was responsible for several key accomplishments which included right-sizing the budget and steering it through significant budget reductions and realignments during the Jindal Administration. He helped to establish and expand Reentry Centers and Day Reporting Centers via the Governmental Efficiency Management System (GEMS) project. And transitioned the offsite offender healthcare system from the old Charity Hospital system to being managed in-house, at a significant cost savings to the State.

He also worked with the Division of Administration, the Legislature and Louisiana State Civil Service to secure several pay increases for Correctional Officers, with starting salary being increased from \$27,000 to \$40,000 and for Probation and Parole Officers whose starting salary went from \$38,000 to \$48,000.

Bickham secured \$160 million in funding across multiple funding streams to replace the flooded Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women. Funding included FEMA reimbursements, insurance payments, General Obligation Bonds, and issuing Lease Revenue Bonds. He also secured funding and resources to replace the outdated CAJUN offender management system with the new CIPRS offender management system. Bickham developed and implemented the savings calculation model for the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, resulting in \$39 million in annual savings invested for crime victim assistance, Office of Juvenile Justice initiatives, community level grants, and expansion of reentry and education services.

Bickham was also elected to the 13- member, Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System Board of Trustees in January 2012 and served three terms through December 2023.

"While Undersecretary Bickham's retirement marks the end of a long and distinguished career, it also marks the beginning of a new chapter, which the leadership and staff wish him the very best in that new season of life," added Secretary Westcott.

Jamie Lee, who has served the department in various capacities for more than 33 years, with 30 of those years in Probation and Parole, will assume the role as acting undersecretary until a permanent replacement is named. The undersecretary is responsible for overseeing the operations of accounting, budget, procurement and contract management, human resources, training, technology services, administrative and facility services, prison enterprise, and consulting services.

-###-