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Sefcik Retires after 17 years as chief of Louisiana State Museums

James F. Sefcik, director of the Louisiana State Museum and assistant secretary of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, announced today his retirement from the state April 2, 2004.

Sefcik was appointed director of the Louisiana State Museum on December 4, 1987 after the Louisiana State Museum Board completed an extensive national search.

As director of the Louisiana State Museum, he oversees a total of nine museums around the state of Louisiana: the Cabildo, the Presbytere, the Old U.S. Mint, Madame John's Legacy, the 1850 House, the Arsenal, the E.D. White House in Thibodaux, the Wedell-Williams Memorial Aviation Museum in Patterson, and the Old Courthouse Museum in Natchitoches.

After only three months on board, the Cabildo, the flagship facility of the Louisiana State Museum, was ravaged by one of the worst fires in the French Quarter since the 18th century. Sefcik engaged in an ambitious private capital campaign, raising more than two million dollars to rebuild the Cabildo. The Cabildo complex, which originally dated back to 1799, reopened in 1994 after a massive restoration program.

Over the past two decades as the director of the Louisiana State Museum, the 61 year-old Sefcik was successful in raising more than \$67 million from private sources to capital outlay revenues. He is also credited with transforming the Presbytere into a world-class Mardi Gras Museum.

During his 17-year tenure as director, the Friends of the Cabildo has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the Louisiana Museum Foundation has raised millions of dollars for museum programs.

Sefcik convinced the Board of Directors to establish a Museum Endowment Fund, which now totals more than \$2 million. Under his leadership, capital outlay funding for the museums blossomed to over \$40 million while operating budgets increased from \$1.6 million to over \$4.8 million. Under his direction, the Louisiana State Museum has grown from 65 to 125 full-time employees including five employees possessing PhD's.

More

When Sefcik was hired in 1987, he was charged with overseeing five facilities, but the Louisiana Legislature, recognizing his professional leadership, later added three more state museums to his purview. He led the campaign to reopen Madame John's Legacy, one of the oldest homes in New Orleans, which had been closed to the public since 1975, and inaugurated the National History Day program in Louisiana.

The Legislature also added new museums to be built under Sefcik's watch including a new Civil Rights Museum in New Orleans, a Louisiana History Museum in Baton Rouge and the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame Museum in Natchitoches. The Baton Rouge facility is under construction and scheduled to open in the spring of 2005.

Sefcik has earned the Louisiana State Museum numerous, distinguished honors including re-accreditation by the American Association of Museums, the first museum in Louisiana to be offered a Smithsonian affiliation and the only museum in Louisiana to be a member of The Art Museum Image Consortium (AMICO.) Also the Cabildo was awarded the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a certificate from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for the Cabildo restoration.

Over the years, Sefcik has garnered numerous professional awards including the first and only recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Louisiana Association of Museums in 2002 and the Lifetime Contribution Award from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities in 2003.

Under his leadership, Sefcik has increased museum attendance from under 90,000 to more than 300,000 annually.

Prior to his appointment as director by the Louisiana State Museum in 1987, Sefcik served as assistant Director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. He also held key positions at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia and the New York State Museum in Albany.

He is married and the father of two adult sons.