

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 1, 2025

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MTA EXECUTIVE
BOARD



Laura Beth Strickland
President
Visit Vicksburg



Kurt Allen
President-Elect
Mississippi Aquarium



Paige Hunt
Vice President
Visit Starkville



Kinney Ferris
Secretary/Treasurer
Visit Oxford



Dr. Rickey Thigpen
Past President
Visit Jackson



**MISSISSIPPI TOURISM ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES
2025-2026 EXECUTIVE BOARD LEADERSHIP**

(Jackson, Miss.) - The Mississippi Tourism Association (MTA), the unified voice of Mississippi's tourism industry for over 35 years, is proud to announce its newly elected Executive Board Officers for the 2025-2026 term:

- Laura Beth Strickland, Executive Director - Visit Vicksburg: MTA President
- Kurt Allen, President & CEO – Mississippi Aquarium: President-Elect
- Paige Hunt, Director of Tourism – Visit Starkville: Vice President
- Kinney Ferris, Executive Director – Visit Oxford: Secretary/Treasurer
- Dr. Rickey Thigpen, President & CEO - Visit Jackson: MTA Past President

The MTA Board of Directors also includes three representatives from each of five geographic regions across Mississippi, along with three at-large members, reflecting the diversity and reach of the state's tourism industry.

President Laura Beth Strickland said, "Mississippi tourism plays a vital role in driving the state's economy, contributing significantly to job creation, local businesses, and overall economic development. I am excited and honored to serve as this year's president of Mississippi Tourism Association as we work to enhance the guest experience through our workforce development programs and celebrate Mississippi's distinctive blend of Southern hospitality, rich history, and vibrant culture. The goal is to foster innovation and collaboration across all sectors of the industry—from hotels and restaurants to entertainment and local attractions—ensuring that visitors enjoy a memorable, seamless experience. The tourism industry is expected to continue its positive impact, generating billions in revenue and supporting thousands of jobs across hospitality, retail, and service sectors. From major attractions to small, locally owned businesses, every part of the tourism ecosystem benefits from the influx of visitors. Leading the hospitality industry in Mississippi is an incredible responsibility and opportunity to shape the future of tourism and service excellence in the state. I am looking forward to working together to strengthen Mississippi's position as a competitive destination in the national and global travel markets as well as support destinations that people not only want to visit but also will choose to live."

"Tourism continues to be a cornerstone of Mississippi's economy, generating billions in revenue and driving opportunity across every region of our state," said Danielle Morgan, Executive Director of the Mississippi Tourism Association. "This progress is the result of tireless work by our tourism professionals and the shared commitment of state and local leaders who recognize the value of investing in our industry. As we enter a new year, we are proud to welcome a dynamic slate of leaders who bring energy, insight, and a deep understanding of both the opportunities and challenges ahead. Their guidance will help us strengthen our industry, support our members, and build a more connected and resilient tourism economy. The continued dedication of our volunteer leadership is vital to our mission, and with this outstanding team in place, MTA is poised for another impactful year of growth and collaboration."

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ABOUT MTA

The voice of tourism, the Mississippi Tourism Association is a membership organization whose mission is to unite all sectors of the tourism industry through advocacy, promotion and education. MTA's vision is to transform Mississippi's economy through increased visitor spending and overall travel industry growth. For more than 35 years, MTA has led the Mississippi's tourism education and advocacy efforts. Membership and organization details can be found at www.mstourism.com

IMAGE DOWNLOADS:

Download photo of Laura Beth Strickland [here](#)

Download photo of Kurt Allen [here](#)

Download photo of Paige Hunt [here](#)

Download photo of Kinney Ferris [here](#)

Download photo of Rickey Thigpen [here](#)

Download photo of Executive Board [here](#)