



WWW.LSUHOSPITALS.ORG

- BOGALUSA MEDICAL CENTER - BOGALUSA
- EARL K. LONG MEDICAL CENTER - BATON ROUGE
- LALLIE KEMP REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER - INDEPENDENCE
- LEONARD J. CHABERT MEDICAL CENTER - HOUMA
- LSU INTERIM HOSPITAL - NEW ORLEANS
- UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER - LAFAYETTE
- W.O. MOSS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER - LAKE CHARLES

## IN THE NEWS

[[HTTP://WWW.LSUHOSPITALS.ORG/MEDIA-RELATIONS/IN-THE-NEWS.HTM](http://www.lsuhealthcare.org/media-relations/in-the-news.htm)]

[FRIDAY, JULY 27, 2007]

Foti: Hospital closure requires legislative OK  
Times – Picayune | 07.27.07

La. job count bounces back from storms  
The Advocate | 07.27.07

Ex-colleagues support doctor accused in Katrina deaths  
Houston Chronicle | 07.25.07

## **Foti: Hospital closure requires legislative OK**

**Times – Picayune | 07.27.07**

City Council sought opinion on Charity

By Kate Moran

Attorney General Charles Foti has emboldened activists who say Charity Hospital should have reopened after Hurricane Katrina with an opinion that the Louisiana State University system cannot close any hospital without the Legislature's approval.

Foti wrote the opinion last month at the request of the New Orleans City Council, whose members have argued that the demise of Charity has contributed to a critical lack of hospital beds, especially for patients with psychiatric disorders. The opinion was not circulated publicly until this week.

"It strengthens the call to reopen Charity Hospital. It clearly lays out that the hospital can't be closed without legislative approval," Councilwoman Shelley Midura said Thursday.

"We are facing a health care capacity crisis," Midura continued. "What it boils down to is that LSU is failing its obligation to the people of New Orleans. They are not doing everything they could do to increase hospital capacity, which would be reopening Charity, even temporarily."

Charity is one of two hospitals that make up the Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans. Both hospitals suffered heavy damage during Katrina, and LSU's health care services division decided to mothball Charity and resurrect its sister facility, University Hospital.

The Legislature never voted to approve the closure of Charity.

While the reopening of University restored limited hospital services for the uninsured, critics have argued that Charity should have been revived in part because it had a 100-bed ward for mental patients before the storm. Today, the largest psychiatric ward in the region is a 60-bed unit at Orleans Parish Prison.

### New facility planned

LSU has argued in the past that reopening Charity, an Art Deco landmark that was deteriorating even before Katrina, would be a poor use of taxpayer money. The university is making plans to build a new teaching hospital downtown, at an estimated cost of \$1.2 billion.

LSU also will open a temporary mental hospital with 33 beds later this summer on the DePaul campus Uptown, near Audubon Park.

Midura said the university could consider bringing Charity back on a temporary basis even as it plans a new, better- equipped hospital near Claiborne Avenue.

"We want to have a brand new hospital," Midura said. "This is not about either/or. This is about immediately solving the bed capacity problem."

### LSU opinion

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

University officials maintained Thursday that they followed the law in deciding to close Charity after Katrina.

"We have been and continue to be well aware of the relevant statutes, constitutional provisions, executive orders and state and federal regulations and have taken them into account in all our actions relating to health care issues throughout the state," Ray Lamonica, general counsel for the university system, said in a prepared statement.

A stroke patient and activist who has pushed for reopening Charity disagreed.

"It validates that they need to follow the law, which they have flaunted," Brad Ott said of the attorney general's opinion. "As a patient, I have had to endure care in tents and smelly old shopping centers. I go to waiting rooms that are packed with people. It's offensive."

<http://www.nola.com/timespic/stories/index.ssf?base/news-5/1185550511230280.xml&coll=1>

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

## **La. job count bounces back from storms**

**The Advocate | 07.27.07**

By GARY PERILLOUX

Something strange is happening to Louisiana just a month away from the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

The state, which endured an estimated \$100 billion in damage from Katrina and her September 2005 counterpart, Rita, has nearly recovered all its jobs.

Some of the jobs are different — driven by recovery construction projects and Gulf Opportunity Zone-financed commercial work — but June job numbers released by the state Department of Labor this week show Louisiana with 1.914 million jobs.

That's a mere 40,000 short of the state's pre-Katrina employment peak in 2005, a milestone Louisiana might reach in a matter of months.

Shortly after the hurricanes, economists feared such job recovery might take the better part of a decade, not two years. That still may be the case for New Orleans, but other growth areas in the state are compensating.

"I think there's a very good chance that by the time we get into 2008, the state will actually be setting record levels of employment," said Loren Scott, a consulting economist and LSU professor emeritus.

"I think there's a good chance we will be back to where we were in 2005."

When that happens in 2008 is guesswork, but trends suggest the job milestone could be reached next year.

Construction companies and their workers are beefing up employment levels, with 15 current projects of \$1 billion or more in south Louisiana, Scott said, adding that greater Baton Rouge itself has \$4 billion worth of commercial construction projects.

In March, a benchmarking process revealed that New Orleans job numbers had been undercounted by 50,000. In that process, the state Labor Department and the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics take employer payroll tax records from the state once a year to get a more complete snapshot of jobs than monthly estimates provided after the storms. Statewide, the revision pushed employment up more than 70,000 than previously estimated.

That process will occur again in February. And Scott believes many construction companies now in the state aren't being picked up by monthly employer surveys and won't show up until the benchmark process captures them again on tax records.

Factoring in seasonal influences, Scott said the state is possibly as close as 32,000 jobs of its previous mark rather than 40,000.

The New Orleans metro area is 113,000 jobs from its pre-Katrina peak.

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

“With the employment numbers, I think what you really have to keep your eye on right now is the New Orleans area,” said economist Jim Richardson, who heads LSU’s Public Administration Institute. “The employment numbers there are back to just over 500,000 people working — and that’s out of what was about 620,000.”

Scott said it’s the area behind the levees — St. Bernard, Plaquemines and Orleans parishes — that are still hurting deeply in the seven-parish New Orleans metro area. Jefferson Parish has largely recovered its population and work force and St. Tammany Parish is booming.

“At some point, (New Orleans) is going to plateau and it’s probably not going to go back to 620,000,” Richardson said. “You don’t have housing for people to live in, so there are natural constraints.”

U.S. Census Bureau estimates show Louisiana’s population at about 4.3 million, still well short of pre-storm estimates exceeding 4.5 million.

That shortfall gives rise to an obvious question: Can Louisiana recover its previous employment peak with a smaller population?

“I think we could get back without having that many people,” Richardson said. “In terms of jobs, we probably don’t need 4.5 million. I think we have a different mix of population.”

The mix includes fewer people who aren’t willing or able to work, he said.

Scott concurs, pointing out that Louisiana added nearly 68,000 jobs last year. Even with job growth plateauing slightly, that trend would push the state back to its former job level.

It’s also likely that population is being undercounted for reasons similar to the probable job undercount, he said.

“It would have to be,” Scott said of the likelihood a population undercount exists. “Because the population follows the job for the most part. So it’s very possible (a job record will be reached in 2008), given what’s going on in the other parts of the state (outside New Orleans) and the fact that I think there’s an undercount in construction.”

<http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/8753517.html?showAll=y&c=y>

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

## **Ex-colleagues support doctor accused in Katrina deaths**

**Houston Chronicle | 07.25.07**

After grand jury's refusal to indict, former Galveston co-workers say justice has been served in the case involving New Orleans physician

By HARVEY RICE

GALVESTON — Former colleagues of Dr. Anna Pou at the University of Texas Medical Branch say they are not surprised by a Louisiana grand jury's refusal to indict her on charges of mercy killing in a hospital stranded by floodwaters from Hurricane Katrina.

Doctors and nurses who worked with Pou at UTMB have supported her since she was arrested last summer along with two nurses.

Louisiana Attorney General Charles Foti concluded that they injected a lethal combination of drugs in four patients at Memorial Medical Center in New Orleans.

Pou and nurses Lori Budo and Cheri Landry voluntarily remained with the seriously ill patients as temperatures reached 100 degrees in a hospital without electricity or water for three desperate days after the 2005 hurricane.

"I found her to be very dedicated and to be a very good doctor and it just flew in the face of common sense that the person I had worked with had those charges filed against her," said Dr. Terry McNearney, a UTMB rheumatologist who had a professional relationship with Pou.

Pou was director of UTMB's division of head and neck surgery before accepting a job in 2004 as associate professor in the department of head and neck surgery at Louisiana State University.

"I think justice has been served," said Deborah Percy, a UTMB operating nurse manager who worked with Pou. "There isn't anybody who is a more thorough patient advocate than Anna Pou, and these charges filed against her were absolutely ludicrous."

Debbie Vassallo, assistant operating room nurse manager, said, "I had complete faith that she would be exonerated."

Percy said the operating room staff collected money and sent it to Pou's legal defense fund.

After the grand jury refused to indict Pou on Wednesday, Foti expressed disapproval and released reports from four medical experts who determined the deaths were homicides.

Charges against the nurses were dropped last month after they appeared before the grand jury.

At a news conference Tuesday in New Orleans, Pou said, "Today's events are not a triumph, but a moment of remembrance for those who lost their lives in the storm and a tribute to all of those who stayed at their posts and served people most in need."

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/4999885.html>

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)