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## **Urban Libraries Council Announces New Executive Board Members**

*Houston Public Library Director Elected Board Chair and Trustees from Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library and Toledo-Lucas County Public Library join ULC's Executive Board*

WASHINGTON – The Urban Libraries Council today announced the election of the new Chair of the Executive Board, as well as the addition of two new members to its Board.

The board members are:

- **Rhea Lawson**, Director, Houston Public Library, incoming ULC Board Chair
- **Brandon Neal**, Trustee, Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library
- **Jesus Salas**, Trustee, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library

“The work of the ULC Executive Board has never been as critical as it is right now,” said ULC President and CEO Susan Benton. “Brandon Neal and Jesus Salas have the qualities needed to serve as an effective voice for libraries in today’s turbulent times and Rhea Lawson’s unparalleled experience positions her well to lead our board into the future. Their experience and positive energy will serve the board and ULC well.”

**Rhea Lawson** has served as Director of Houston Public Library since 2005. She has been a passionate library leader her entire career, starting as a para-professional at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. As the head of the largest library system in Texas, Dr. Lawson has helped the library continuously evolve and move forward, and under her guidance, HPL has

earned over 30 prestigious local, state and national awards for service, innovation and building projects. Dr. Lawson received a mayoral proclamation and a day named after her in honor of her service to Houston's 2.2 million residents. She is keenly focused on making sure that libraries remain essential to the quality of life in communities and has shown steadfast commitment towards serving her community. Dr. Lawson also serves on a number of boards and committees in Houston, as well as nationally.

**Brandon Neal** joined the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library Board of Trustees in January 2017. He has served in numerous leadership roles throughout the Charlotte area, serving on the boards of the Bechtler Museum of Modern art, the N.C. Center for Nonprofits, the Duke Law Alumni and the Unite Charlotte Advisory Council. His professional experience includes his time as Senior Counsel in the Law Department of Wells Fargo, where he is involved in company initiatives such as serving on the leadership team of the Wells Fargo My Generation Team Member Network, being Wells Fargo's representative for the 2014 Fellows Program of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity and serving as a Wells Fargo nominee on the Board of Trustees of the National Urban League. His success and passion for his hometown of Charlotte led to his recognition as one of Charlotte's "Seven to Watch" by the Charlotte Observer for his work in banking and the Charlotte community.

**Jesus Salas** joined the Board of Toledo-Lucas County Public Library in November 2014 and was reappointed to another 7-year term in January 2018. Salas comes to the Board with a wealth of experience serving his community as an attorney, arriving in Toledo in the 1990's to work for what was then called Advocates for Legal Service, stepping up to fight for the Hispanic and African American communities of Toledo. Prior to his board position at the library, Salas has served on the Toledo branch NAACP's Legal Redress Committee and the Thurgood Marshall Law Association and has offered his expertise as a board or committee member at, among others, the Toledo Botanical Garden, Adelante Inc., the Ohio Supreme County Racial Fairness Committee and the Regional Transportation Study Committee.

### **About Urban Libraries Council**

Urban Libraries Council (ULC), founded in 1971, is the voice for public libraries and the force that inspires them to evolve. ULC creates the tools, techniques, and ideas to make ongoing improvements and upgrades in services and technology. ULC also speaks loudly and clearly about the value public libraries bring to communities, and secures funding for research that results in the development of new programs and services. And by serving as a forum for library leadership, ULC produces innovative ideas and best practices that ensure community impact.

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