



## News Release

# Port Commissioner Topsy-Elvord to Retire

## Longtime public servant to step down June 30 after 5 years on board

June 9, 2008

After nearly 50 years of public service to the Long Beach community, Harbor Commissioner Doris Topsy-Elvord is retiring and will not seek reappointment to the Commission, she announced Monday, June 9, 2008.

Topsy-Elvord, a former Long Beach City Councilwoman, was appointed to the Harbor Commission in 2003. She served as Board President in 2005.

In announcing her retirement, effective after the June 30 board meeting, Topsy-Elvord called her five years on the Commission "some of the most challenging and rewarding of my career."

As a Harbor Commissioner, Topsy-Elvord has spearheaded new community outreach programs for the Port, including sponsorships of and participation in many Long Beach community events. She has been a leading champion of the Port's Small Business Enterprise Program, opening Port contracting to a broader spectrum of businesses.

Topsy-Elvord, who served the 6th District for two terms from 1992 to 2000 as the first African-American woman elected to the City Council, is also the first African American and only the third woman appointed to the five-member governing board for the Port of Long Beach. While on the City Council, her colleagues unanimously voted her vice mayor for four years, and the Harbor Commission elected her to a one-year term as Board President in July 2005.

"On behalf of the Harbor Commission, I wish Doris the very best in her well-earned retirement," said Harbor Commission President Mario Cordero. "While we will certainly miss her, we thank her for her many contributions to the community, most recently as a Harbor Commissioner. We are grateful that she has contributed so much to all of us in the City of Long Beach with her decades of selfless public service."

She joined the Board after a lengthy career in social welfare and public service for the citizens of Long Beach, where she served on many boards and commissions.

As a Councilwoman, she initiated the Midnight Basketball League of Long Beach, which is a deterrent to gang violence, the Atlantic Community Economic Development Corporation (ACED), and the Herb Smith Annual Slow-Pitch Tournament. She also reorganized Long Beach's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Unity Parade and Celebration, which involves

thousands of participants yearly.

Topsy-Elvord is a graduate of California State University, Long Beach, with a bachelor's degree in social welfare and earned a master's degree in criminal justice administration from Chapman College. She worked with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the California Youth Authority and the Los Angeles County Probation Department as a Deputy Probation Officer for 19 years before retiring in 1988.

Her public service includes a term on the Long Beach Civil Service Commission as President, the Long Beach Unified School District Personnel Commission, and she was appointed by Cardinal Mahoney to the First Justice of Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, which was mandated by the Pope.

She has served on the boards of many organizations including the Women's Resource Center of California State University, Long Beach, Long Beach Transit, the Long Beach Museum of Art, United Way, St. Mary Medical Center, the Children's Dental Foundation of Memorial Medical Center, the National Conference of Community and Justice, the Long Beach Youth Centers and the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials.

For her dedication to her community, she has been presented many honors including the 2008 Humanitarian Award from the California Conference for Equality & Justice, the Amigo Award of C.H.A., the Ron Brown Economic Development Award for Public Service by the Urban League, the Women of Distinction Human Rights/Status of Women Award from Soroptimist International, and State Senator Ralph Dill's "Woman of the Year" in 1993.

She is included in St. Anthony's High School Hall of Fame, and Dorothy Ehrhart-Morrison featured Ms. Topsy-Elvord in her book, "No Mountain High Enough," that profiles outstanding African-American women.

She is also the co-founder of the African-American Heritage Society of Long Beach, which raised more than \$45,000 to supply books to the Long Beach Public Library Burnett Branch as a resource for the entire City and southern Los Angeles County.

A native of Vicksburg, Mississippi, Topsy-Elvord has been a Long Beach resident for more than 60 years. She and her husband, Ralph Elvord, are the parents of three sons and two daughters, and they have eight grandchildren.

Contact: Art Wong, Port of Long Beach Assistant Director of Communications/Public Information Officer, (562) 590-4123, (562) 619-5665 (cell), or [wong@polb.com](mailto:wong@polb.com).