

## Biography of Jim Wetherington Mayor, Columbus, Georgia

Elected to office in November, 2006, Jim Wetherington was sworn in as the 67<sup>th</sup> Mayor of Columbus, Georgia, on January 2, 2007.

Mayor Wetherington brings a wealth of experience in public service to the office. After graduation from Campbellton, Florida High School, he joined the Army and saw duty as a military police officer, serving for a time at the Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D. C.

In 1959, he joined the Columbus Police Department as a patrolman. He quickly rose through the ranks as Sergeant (Traffic Division), Lieutenant (Traffic Division), Director (Alcohol Safety Action Project), Commander (Patrol/Detective Division) and ultimately, in 1981, was named by then-Mayor Harry Jackson as Chief of the Columbus Police Department. He served under five mayors, and retired from the Police Department in 1995.

During his time as Chief of Police, Mayor Wetherington created a new promotional system to eliminate appointed ranks, thus ensuring successful promotions and participation by minority members of the Department. Within the Department, he created the Neighborhood Watch Program, Crime Stoppers, Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program (DARE), Gang Task Force and the Juvenile Diversion Program. He upgraded training facilities and obtained national accreditation for the Department. He was also instrumental in the formation of the Georgia Law Enforcement Command College at Columbus State University.

In 1995, he was appointed by Governor Zell Miller to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, where he served for three years, two of those as Vice Chair. During his time on the Board, the agency was honored with American Probation and Parole Association's President's Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Field, and the Council of State Governments Innovations Award for Innovation in Government.

In 1999, Governor Roy Barnes appointed him Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Corrections. In the four years he served in that position, he administered the sixth largest prison system in the nation, consisting of 47 inmate facilities housing over 47,000 inmates. He created Programs Division to offer evidence-based programs for offenders to decrease the likelihood of re-offending.

Mayor Wetherington served Columbus once again in 2004 as Headmaster of Calvary Christian School, a Pre-K through 12th grade private school.

During his first term as Mayor of Columbus, Mayor Wetherington successfully sought approval from the voters for the passage of a one percent Local Option Sales Tax. Seventy percent of the Local Option Sales Tax proceeds will be dedicated to Public Safety and thirty percent will be dedicated to Roads and Infrastructure. As a result of this funding, the Columbus Police Department is hiring 100 new police officers who will be engaged in community policing. The Mayor has also begun an office for Crime Prevention and Intervention, which will oversee efforts to prevent crime by emphasis on recreation, education, employment, drug use prevention and community policing. Columbus is well on its way to achieving the status Mayor Wetherington seeks as one of the safest cities in the country.

Mayor Wetherington is also actively involved in economic development in the Columbus region. In June of 2009, the Mayor played a vital role in securing a manufacturing plant to be built by NCR bringing 870 new jobs to Columbus. He is working closely with both military and civilian leaders at Fort Benning to assure a smooth transition for the Maneuver Center of Excellence and the transfer of the mission of the Armor Training School from Fort Knox, Kentucky, to Fort Benning. This move brings a \$3.5 billion capital investment in our community, and will provide some 11,000 jobs. These are just two examples of the on-going efforts Mayor Wetherington is engaged in to secure a more viable economic climate in Columbus.

The Mayor holds a BS in Criminal Justice Administration from Columbus State University, and an MS in Education from Georgia State University.

The Mayor's Honors include:

- Columbusite of the Year, 1995, selected by readers' poll conducted by *Columbus and the Valley Magazine*
- Police Chief of the Year, 1994, Georgia Police Chiefs Association
- Liberty Bell Award, 1994, Georgia Bar Association
- Judge Aaron Cohn Award, 1993, for leadership in establishing the Child Advocacy Center
- William Henry Shaw Award for Service to Education, 1992, Phi Delta Kappa Education Fraternity
- American Criminal Justice Association Award, 1988, Lambda Alpha Epsilon Criminal Justice Fraternity
- Boss of the Year, 1987, Sojourner Chapter of American Business Women's Association
- Outstanding Man of the Year, 1986, Columbus American Legion
- Hispanic and Asian People of Columbus Award, 1984
- Distinguished Alumni Award, 1984, Columbus State University
- Police Officer of the Year, 1967, Exchange Club of Columbus

Mayor Wetherington is married to Shirley Bell Wetherington. They have three children and eight grandchildren. He is a member of Wynnbrook Baptist Church.