

Biography of William J. "Jim" Wetherington Mayor, Columbus, Georgia

Elected to office in November, 2006, William J. "Jim" Wetherington was sworn in as the 67th 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 1963, 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. He implemented the Crime Prevention Unit within the Department, creating 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.

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.