
News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 4, 2020

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Long Beach City Council Member Rex Richardson Sworn in as SCAG President; Sets Sights on Strategies for Local Resilience and Inclusive Economic Recovery

Building an inclusive and equitable recovery strategy that addresses the health, social and economic challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic tops Rex Richardson's policy priorities as the newly installed President of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

Richardson, a Long Beach City Council member, was sworn in Thursday to lead the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization after serving as SCAG's First Vice President this past year. At 36, he is the youngest person to hold the office of President in the agency's 55-year history. SCAG represents 191 cities, six counties, and a population of more than 19 million.

"Our communities are facing a crisis on three fronts: a public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, an economic crisis with unprecedented levels of unemployment, and a social justice emergency as a result of longstanding racial inequities. The communities we serve are looking to SCAG for innovative and forward-thinking leadership," Richardson said. "This is a moment that demands we redefine what 'resiliency' means for local government. In the weeks and months ahead, we have a unique opportunity to fundamentally change systems and processes to be more inclusive, equitable, and effective."

SCAG recently released an economic analysis projecting "severe and long-lasting" impacts from the pandemic, including Great Depression-level unemployment, supply chain interruptions, and significant loss in taxable sales. The severity of the decline is unprecedented, and the impacts are likely to be felt at least through the end of 2021, the analysis showed.

"In light of this pandemic, we need to act today but we also need to provide a vision for the future. There's no going back to the way we were before the COVID-19 hit," Richardson said, noting that long-standing SCAG priorities such as transportation, sustainability, closing the digital divide, housing and homelessness "are still critical issues that will affect our region for decades."

"It's crucial that we communicate and strategize together – as a region – to prevent a further loss of life, restore our economy, and ensure that local governments have the resources they need to recover. This is a time to double down on science and ensure that data, not politics, dictate our direction forward," he said.

Richardson was first elected to the Long Beach City Council in 2014, representing the 9th District, which encompasses the community of North Long Beach. He serves as Chair of the Long Beach City Council Economic Development and Finance Committee and also as Chair of the Long Beach Housing Authority. Councilmember Richardson has a history rooted in advocacy for our most vulnerable communities and is recognized for taking innovative approaches to address local government challenges.

His record of accomplishment includes championing the Long Beach Economic Inclusion Implementation Plan, establishing the City's Office of Equity, expanding shelter capacity to address homelessness, creating the Promising Adults, Tomorrow's Hope (PATH) Young Adult Diversion Program, and leading the Long Beach My Brother's Keeper initiative. He's also secured major investments to revitalize North Long Beach with the building of the Michelle Obama Neighborhood Library, renovating and expanding the Houghton Park Community Center, and by securing hundreds of millions of dollars in private commercial and industrial development.

Richardson attended California State University-Dominguez Hills, where he served as student body president. He began his career as a community organizer and later served as Chief of Staff to Long Beach's 9th Council Office. He's currently an External Affairs manager for Crown Castle.

Richardson and his wife Nina have two daughters, Alina and Mila.

In addition to Richardson, SCAG officers elected Thursday are: First Vice-President: Clint Lorimore, City Council member for Eastvale, and Second Vice-President: Jan Harnik, City Council member for Palm Desert. Big Bear Lake City Council member Bill Jahn will serve as Immediate Past President.

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.