



Long Beach City Auditor Laura L. Doud. Courtesy photo.

PEOPLE POST

NOV 22 12:31 PM

## Hotline helps in deterring, detecting and disclosing fraud in the city

Laura L. Doud



*People Post is a space for opinion pieces, letters to the editor and guest submissions from members of the Long Beach community. The following is an op-ed submitted by Long Beach City Auditor Laura L. Doud, and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Long Beach Post.*

Around this time each year, the holiday craze begins. Fun events and festive gatherings fill our calendars. However, this also is the time of year in which International Fraud Awareness Week falls. The week is set aside to raise awareness about the negative impact of fraud, waste and abuse on all types of organizations. At this time, I'd like to highlight what my office is doing to address fraud, waste and abuse against the city of Long Beach.

This year, my office is celebrating its 110th anniversary. Since the early 1900s, Long Beach city auditors have worked toward a greater Long Beach by facilitating good governance through transparency and accountability. We do this today not only through our performance audits, but also through the City Auditor's Fraud Hotline that I revitalized when I took office in 2006.

As the independent City Auditor, I lead a team dedicated to deterring, detecting and disclosing fraud within the city. Each one of us is impacted by fraud, waste and abuse against our city, because public resources are lost, reducing budgets for important city services including public safety, street repairs, libraries and parks.

The value of having this fraud hotline is that it allows anyone—city employees, vendors, business owners and citizens—to easily and anonymously report allegations of city fraud, waste or abuse at any time. The City Auditor's Fraud Hotline has been incredibly beneficial as there have been over 500 tips submitted since its implementation. For each tip receive, we create a case and conduct analysis to determine if there is sufficient basis to investigate.

In cases we investigate, if we substantiate allegations or identify control weaknesses, we issue recommendations to city departments for corrective action. If a tip leads to issues that are more widespread, we may conduct a performance audit. Some of my office's most impactful performance audits have been triggered by fraud hotline tips. This includes:

- A performance audit which found a \$1 million annual shortfall for park and park tree maintenance as the city continued to expand parks without managing resources. Parks play a critical role in creating healthy, livable communities, and we want to ensure the quality of our parks are sustained for future generations. Recommendations resulted in the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department receiving an increase up to \$710,000 annually to the aggregate amount of two landscape maintenance contracts.
- A performance audit found 9-1-1 dispatchers were working a significant amount of overtime, up to nearly 100% of their salaries. Not only was there a cost of \$1.3 million incurred by the overtime, but this much overtime can lead to serious dispatcher fatigue, posing an unnecessary risk to public safety. Recommendations resulted in a review of emergency dispatcher staffing levels and schedules, the disproportionate distribution of overtime within the dispatcher workforce, as well as their recruitment efforts.
- During an accounting system integration in the Animal Care Services (ACS) Bureau, financial discrepancies for deposited revenues were found. Upon discovery, city management contacted my office to review revenues and confirm if fraud occurred. My office's findings provided critical evidence in the prosecution of an ACS employee who had embezzled \$250,000 in the 11 months reviewed. This demonstrated my office's critical role as an independent reviewer of operations.

As you can see, tips are important in not only finding city fraud, waste or abuse, but also in identifying important issues and services that affect the quality of life.

Please be alert to any potential wrongdoing against the city. If something doesn't add up, sound right or feel right, it's probably not right, please report it. You can anonymously report tips 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to the City Auditor's Fraud Hotline:

- Call [1-888-FRAUD-07 \(1-888-372-8307\)](tel:1-888-FRAUD-07)
- Fill out a form at [CityAuditorLauraDoud.com](http://CityAuditorLauraDoud.com)
- Use the MyAuditor App (available at the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#))

Your tips are vital as we work to deter and detect fraud against the city. Together we can make our city better by protecting taxpayer dollars and ensuring they are used for the public's benefit.

You can find out more information on city fraud, waste and abuse [here](#) and the City Auditor's Fraud Hotline annual outcomes [here](#). To see how our office has evolved and contributed to a greater Long Beach through impactful work, see our #LBCityAuditor110 Year Timeline [here](#).