

PRESS-TELEGRAM

Long Beach auditor urges vigilance for fraud in tough times



City Auditor Laura Doud poses in a conference room named after Myrtle Gunsul showing an exhibit on her life as Long Beach's first woman to hold elected office at the Long Beach City Hall on Tuesday, March 26, 2019. Myrtle Gunsul was first elected in 1919, after serving 4 years as Chief Deputy City Auditor, she was re-elected ten times and retired in 1951 after serving 32 years. (Photo by Ana P. Garcia, Contributing Photographer)

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LONG BEACH –

Nov. 15-21 has been designated International Fraud Awareness Week, and Long Beach City Auditor Laura Doud says it's more important than ever to be alert.

"During challenging times, the pressure, opportunity and risk of fraud increases, and it is extremely important, especially now, that we have this tool (a fraud hotline) to report tips of alleged fraud," Doud said in a release. "City fraud, waste and abuse can lead to lost revenue and resources impacting important services, including public safety, street repairs, libraries and parks."

Doud jump-started a fraud hotline in 2007, shortly after being elected, with a third party vendor to ensure anonymity and bringing it into the digital age with online and app-based options to send tips in. For 2019, the hotline handled 57 cases started by calls to the hotline. Almost half of the cases resulted in full auditor investigations, and another one-third were referred to other city departments for action.

Ultimately, six tips in 2019 were found to be substantiated, with action taken due to fraud, waste or abuse involving city assets.

Tips are not the only way the auditor's office finds out about issues requiring investigation, but they are the most common. At least that is what a Global Fraud Study sponsored by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners concluded.

"If something doesn't add up, sound right or feel right, it's probably not right," Doud said in her release. "We encourage anyone who suspects fraud to report the detailed tip to the City Auditor's Fraud Hotline."

To submit a tip, call 1-888-FRAUD-07 (1-888-372-8307), fill out the form at CityAuditorLauraDoud.com or use the MyAuditor App, available at the App Store or Google Play.