



## County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors



### **SUPERVISOR PETER F. SCHABARUM**

Term: 1972 - 1991  
District: First  
Date of Birth: Jan. 9, 1929

Peter F. (Frank) Schabarum was appointed county supervisor in March 1972 by Gov. Ronald Reagan following the death of incumbent Frank G. Bonelli. He was elected to the position three months later in a hotly contested special election that pitted him against his former roommate and colleague Assemblyman William Campbell.

Schabarum was re-elected in 1974, 1978, 1982 and 1986. He did not seek re-election in 1990, but served three extra months until Feb. 28, 1991 to allow a special election to be held following a court ruling that redrew the boundaries of his district to provide a better opportunity for the election of an Hispanic.

Born Jan. 9, 1929 in Los Angeles, Schabarum spent his early childhood years in San Marino and graduated from Covina Union High School in 1947. He attended the University of California at Berkeley, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration. During that time, he was an All-Conference halfback playing in three Rose Bowls with the Berkeley Golden Bears. He played for the San Francisco 49ers during the 1951-53-54 seasons, taking time off in 1952-53 to serve in the U.S. Air Force in the Korean War.

After his professional football career, Schabarum returned to Covina and built Schabarum Companies, an independent commercial real estate development company. In 1965 he began his public service as the youngest Grand Jury foreman in the history of Los Angeles County.

Schabarum was elected to the State Assembly in 1966, 1968 and 1970, representing the 49th District. There he authored what was then the most progressive anti-pollution legislation in the United States, including removing lead from gasoline, and worked consistently for welfare reform. He chaired the Assembly's Air Quality Subcommittee and served on the Transportation, Ways and Means, Revenue and Taxation and Government Organization committees.

Schabarum was an assemblyman when Reagan appointed him to fill the vacancy created by Bonelli's death.

During his 19 years on the Board of Supervisors, Schabarum:

- Became known for his tough stance against government taxation and the inefficient use of public funds. In 1978 he sponsored Proposition A, a contracting-out ballot measure overwhelmingly approved by voters to allow the use of private firms instead of county employees when it was less costly or more efficient.
- Led efforts to develop 28 local parks, six regional parks, one golf course, 130

miles of bike lanes and 119 miles of equestrian trails. Supervisors renamed Otterbein Park in Rowland Heights in his honor in recognition of his efforts to improve recreation facilities, as well as a major portion of the trail leading from the San Gabriel Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

- Played a major role in establishing a network of trauma centers in the county to allow patients to get emergency medical care more quickly and efficiently.
- Facilitated the opening of a \$20 million county comprehensive health center in El Monte to provide primary care and special services to low-income and fixed-income elderly residents. Developed a master plan for the future of Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in Downey, launching the architectural work on the first building of the master plan before his retirement.
- Spearheaded numerous county programs to control gang violence, restrict billboard proliferation, eliminate graffiti and reduce government rules.

Schabarum was involved in the initial planning of the Disney Concert Hall and served on the Los Angeles County Coliseum Commission, where he played a part in bringing the 1984 Olympics to Los Angeles. He led efforts to make the county airport system a revenue-generating operation so that taxpayers did not have to carry the burden for personal aviation, and applied the same concept to the county golf courses.

Wanting to provide better bus service, Schabarum led an effort to allow local governments to break away from the Southern California Rapid Transit District (RTD), and 21 cities in his district formed the Foothill Transit District in 1988. He was honored for this effort by the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments in 2007. Schabarum is also credited with providing better regional transportation services by being instrumental in the creation of the Metropolitan Transportation Agency, which was formed by consolidating RTD and the Los Angeles County Transportation Committee.

Schabarum served on the County Supervisors Association of California, Southern California Water Committee, and the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. He was a member of the board of directors of the Los Angeles County Fair and was chair of the Los Angeles County Transportation Committee. President Reagan appointed him to the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations in 1981-82 and President George H.W. Bush appointed him to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum board of directors from 1987 to 1992.

Memberships included the Los Angeles Rotary Club; the Rancheros Visitadores, an equestrian group; and the International Footprinters Association, an organization that sponsors charitable activities for underprivileged children.

Los Angeles Magazine named Schabarum one of the 50 most powerful people in Los Angeles County and the non-partisan California Journal called him one of the 30 most influential persons in California history during the 20th Century. In 1972 he was awarded the Distinguished American Award by the National Football League's Hall of Fame and in 1988 was inducted into the University of California Berkeley Hall of Fame. Pepperdine University awarded him an honorary doctor of law degree.

Schabarum is known as the father of term limits, having authored Prop. 140 in 1990 that imposed term limits on California state legislators. Unable that year to persuade his colleagues on the Board of Supervisors to also limit their terms, Schabarum financed and was the behind-the-scenes orchestrator of a successful 2002 ballot measure that limited supervisors to three terms.

Schabarum was a strong supporter of the arts and traveled frequently while a supervisor on trips sponsored by the County Museum of Natural History to promote the institution. In 1997, six years after his retirement, he got into legal trouble for not reporting trips paid for by the museum on his income tax forms. Originally charged with three counts of felony tax evasion, the charges were reduced to misdemeanors after he paid a fine and did community work with the El Monte Boys Club. The court terminated probation and dismissed the charges.

Schabarum and his wife, Gerry, had three children, Laura, Frank and Tom. Gerry Schabarum died in March 2007 in Indian Wells, where the couple moved following his retirement.

Source: County records.