



# County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors

## SUPERVISOR RICHARD HENRY NORTON

Term: 1912 - 1917  
District: Second  
Date of Birth: May 5, 1851  
Death: Jan. 25, 1921

Richard Henry Norton served as county supervisor for two terms. He was elected to office in November 1912 and again in 1916. On Oct. 11, 1917, Norton was removed from office after being charged with misappropriating funds. He was replaced by Edward James Delorey on Dec. 17, 1917.

Norton was born May 5, 1851, in Delhi, India. At a young age, he was sent to England, where he received the major part of his education. Following his graduation from the University of London as a mining engineer, he moved to Canada, where he got a job locating coal mines for the government. Later he moved to the United States and was one of the engineers who put the Northern Pacific Railway into Montana, and went on to become the mining inspector for the State of Washington.

In 1900, at the age of 49, he moved to Los Angeles with the intention of retiring from active professional life. He became interested in local politics and political reform. In 1902 Norton organized the Direct Legislation League of Los Angeles, along with five other civic-minded citizens. This organization was scoffed at and derided, but from its efforts came the present city charter of Los Angeles -- providing for initiative, referendum and recall. In 1904 a member of the Los Angeles City Council was recalled, pursuant to the provisions of the new city charter. Norton was the head and backbone of this movement, and financed its efforts. This recall was the first of its kind in California.

In 1908, at the age of 56, Norton entered law school at the University of Southern California, fulfilling a lifelong dream. After finishing law school, Norton was elected to the Board of Supervisors.

Norton had made political enemies due to his previous recall efforts, and in 1913 an attempt was made to recall him from office, on the stated ground that he was "temperamentally unfit for the office." At the special recall election Norton was overwhelming voted back into office.

In the spring of 1917 formal charges of misappropriating public funds were leveled against Norton and the rest of the Board Supervisors, based on a legal technicality involving the supervisors' job responsibilities and the transfer of funds within the county treasurer's office. Norton was removed from office. After his removal, charges against the other supervisors were dropped.

After leaving office, Norton went into the manufacturing business, but his health worsened.

On Jan. 25, 1921, Norton died. He was 69, and was survived by his wife, Marion, stepdaughter Radir, stepson Paul and brother John.

Source: History of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles Daily Times, Jan. 26, 1921.