

Chesapeake City Councilwoman Dr. Ella P. Ward  
Makes History with Board of Education Tenure

Chesapeake City Councilwoman Dr. Ella P. Ward made history last Thursday for having served the longest term of elected office in the one-hundred-forty year history of the Virginia Board of Education. Dr. Ward was given a special proclamation for having served on the Virginia Board of Education for eight consecutive years while serving as an elected official in the city of Chesapeake at the same time. She was also elected for four consecutive terms as vice president of the Board of Education, having served in that capacity from 2006 to 2011.

Dr. Ward was first appointed to a four-year term on the Board by former Governor Mark Warner in 2003, and she was reappointed to a second four-year term by Governor Tim Kaine in January 2007. She was elected to the Chesapeake School Board in 2000, re-elected in 2004, elected to City Council in 2006, and re-elected to Chesapeake City Council in 2010.

Dr. Ward was recognized by the Board and the State Superintendent for her “Legacy of service which has led to vastly improved Standards of Quality, Standards of Accreditation, academic standards, and teacher licensure standards. Dr. Ward has earned respect and admiration for her public service that will remain of vital importance to public education in the Commonwealth.”

The Board further recognized Dr. Ward for her role as the Board’s liaison to the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure where she led the charge to provide alternatives to Virginia’s Praxis 1 test scores, which were the highest in the nation, as the requirement for Teacher Licensure after all course work and other criteria had been met by prospective teachers. Alternatives such as SAT scores, ACT scores, VCLA scores, and composite test scores were eventually added as alternatives to Praxis 1, and the test scores were moved to entry into Teacher Education Programs rather than as a Licensure requirement.

“This process took several years, but it was finally accomplished, and I consider it one of my major accomplishments as a Board of Education member because so many of Virginia’s teachers had been denied the opportunity to teach in our state due to the extremely high cut scores required on the Praxis 1 test,” said Dr. Ward. “The Praxis 1 Test was not connected to subject matter content, and it was clearly not a predictor of teacher ability. I was happy to help bring about this major change in our teacher certification process in Virginia during my tenure,” she added.