

Keller resigns as Los Angeles port chief

By Peter T. Leach

Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Larry Keller resigned Sept. 17 under pressure from city officials and community leaders.

Port Chief Operating Officer Bruce Seaton has been named acting executive director.

The port has been in turmoil amid investigations into contracting practices and concerns over air pollution. Keller in seven years as executive director presided over Los Angeles' growth into the nation's largest port, but had come under criticism for his leadership in recent years.

In a statement Friday, Los Angeles Mayor James K. Hahn praised Keller,

just a month after he rejected the port's plan to curb air pollution.

The mayor's aides said that he had not forced Keller out and was not dissatisfied with his performance.

"Larry's tenure saw the Port of Los Angeles grow into America's largest maritime gateway and the prime economic generator in the Southland," said Mayor Hahn in a statement. "I wish him well in all his future endeavors."

But City Councilwoman Janice Hahn, who represents the harbor area and had called on Keller to resign more than a year ago, welcomed the announcement.

"It gives us an opportunity to really get leadership at the port that is more in

line with the mayor's direction and the community's direction of having a neighborhood-friendly port," said Hahn, who is the mayor's sister and, like him, lives in San Pedro near the port.

The news won praise from critics who have long blamed Keller for what they see as the port's arrogance and failure to listen to community concerns about pollution and unbridled growth.

Keller started at the port in April 1996 as chief operating officer after 20 years as an executive with Danish ocean carrier Maersk. In 1997, Mayor Richard Riordan named him the port's executive director, a position which paid him \$278,000 annually. ⚓