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Donald Bliss Resigns as Consent Decree Special Master

- Taking position with International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal



Donald Bliss

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Feb. 21, 2006) Atty. Donald Bliss, who has served as special master of the federal Consent Decree for more than nine years, has submitted his resignation to U.S. District Court.

In a letter to District Judge Terry Hatter, who oversees the case, Bliss said he has accepted a position as U.S. representative on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization with the rank of ambassador. He will move to Montreal to take up that post.

"It has been an honor and privilege for me to serve the Court as Special Master for over nine years in this important case," he wrote. "While, in my judgment, progress has been made, I recognize that work remains to be done."

As his replacement, Bliss recommended Robert C. Vanderet, a retired partner of O'Melveny & Myers. Both men are members of the international law firm headquartered in Los Angeles.

Bliss described Vanderet as "an experienced, fair and thoughtful litigator who, in my judgment, will be sensitive to the concerns and interests of both parties."

Expressed appreciation

In a memorandum announcing his resignation, Bliss expressed appreciation to both sides in the lawsuit and to the attorneys, "who have always shown me every courtesy. I have enjoyed very much working with each and every one of you over the past nine years."

The Consent Decree, which was signed by Metro, the ACLU and the Bus Riders Union in 1996, expires Oct. 29, 2006. The case is formally known as Labor/Community Strategy Center vs. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

In his most recent rulings, dated Nov. 30 and Dec. 9, 2005, Bliss approved Metro's New Service Plan and the agency's revised Transit Service Policy, as well as service changes implemented on 13 bus lines.

In the Nov. 30 ruling, he complimented Metro for adding "a new dimension of bus service to Los Angeles County" with implementation of the Metro Rapid program.

"Since the inception of the Consent decree, the MTA has made the improvement of bus service a high priority," Bliss wrote. "The progress has been substantial."

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