

## **Thalia Dondero**

**June 23, 1921—**

**Elected 1974, 1976, 1978, 1986, 1990**

**Thalia Marie Sperry Dondero came to Las Vegas in 1943 and met her future husband, Harvey Dondero, soon after her arrival. The couple helped transform education in southern Nevada. Thalia Dondero was the first woman elected to the Clark County Commission, and was later elected to the University Board of Regents.**

**Dondero was born in Greely, Colorado in 1921. She and her family later moved to Bakersfield, California where she attended school and junior college. Dondero earned a degree in education from the Colorado Teaching School in Greely, Colorado. In 1942, she began working for Basic Magnesium Industries in Sacramento.**



**In 1943, BMI transferred Dondero to Las Vegas. She lived in a boarding house downtown, where she met her future husband, Harvey Dondero, a local educator. She continued working for BMI and helped conduct an inventory of federal surplus items. She later went to work as a bookkeeper for Modern Cleaners in downtown Las Vegas. In 1946, she and Harvey married. They spent the next two years in Carson City where Harvey worked for the US Office of Education.**

**The Dondero family moved back to Las Vegas in 1948. Harvey worked as a school principal and later assistant superintendent of the Clark County School District. Thalia Dondero became active in civic affairs, including the Service League (now the Junior League.) While her five children were in school, Dondero got involved in public education. She became friends with veteran Las Vegas educator Maude Frazier who encouraged her to become more active in the Parent Teacher Association. Dondero served as president of the state PTA. She later became Executive Director of the Girl Scouts.**

**In 1972, Dondero ran for the Nevada State Assembly but lost. Two years later, voters elected her to the Clark County Commission; she was the first woman to serve on that board. There was some controversy in 1975 when Dondero refused to serve as secretary to the otherwise all-male board, and demanded equal treatment. Voters reelected her in 1976, 1978, 1986, and 1990.**

**During her time on the Commission, Dondero worked as an advocate for the homeless, for increased oversight of the airport, for water conservation, flood control, and was founding member of Secret Witness. She also proved to be a strong advocate for public lands and helped set aside land for parks at Red Rock, Valley of Fire, and Lake Tahoe as a member of the Nevada State Parks Commission. She served as chair of the board three times. In 1994, Myrna Williams ran against Dondero in the primary and defeated her in a very contentious campaign.**

**Dondero returned to her roots in education in 1996 when she was elected to the Board of Regents. She served on that board until 2009 when she was forced out due to term-limit restrictions.**

**As of 2009, Thalia Dondero continues to live in Las Vegas and is active in various organizations. Her tenure as the first woman on the Clark County Commission helped pave the way for future female commissioners.**