



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## Striving for opportunity: MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan inducted into National Civil Rights Hall of Fame

Tirelessly crusading for better opportunities for African Americans, equal access and inclusion for all, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Vice President Barbara McGowan has earned her place among Civil Rights giants.

The MWRD vice president was recently inducted into the 2020 class of the National Civil Rights Hall of Fame at the 33rd Anniversary MLK Dinner held by the National Civil Rights Library at Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, 4622 S. King Drive, Chicago.

“Because your life has been about serving others and you have met all the requirements of joining other Freedom Fighters like Dr. King, Mrs. Rosa Parks, Justice Thurgood Marshall, Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer and because you have been a fighter for Justice, we formally induct Vice President Barbara McGowan,” stated William G. Thurman, chairman of the National Civil Rights Library, on the plaque presented to Vice President McGowan.

The longest-serving commissioner on the MWRD’s Board of Commissioners, Vice President McGowan came into office in 1998, going on to become the agency’s first African American Vice President and serving as the first interim African American female president in December 2012 and December 2014.

“I was honored to be inducted into the National Civil Rights Hall of Fame,” said Vice President McGowan. “To be added to this esteemed company of Civil Rights pioneers is humbling and thrilling. I thank these Civil Rights leaders who have gone before me, whose shoulders I stand on, and I credit the National Civil Rights Library for recognizing this achievement. It is encouraging to learn about the difference we are making at the



*MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan was recently inducted into the National Civil Rights Hall of Fame for 2020. For more than 20 years, she has been a leader shaping the many policy decisions at the MWRD to strengthen minority representation in MWRD’s work to protect the region’s water resources.*

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and this recognition inspires us to work harder so that everyone has equal opportunity.”

Vice President McGowan has served as a stalwart leader and steady presence as chairman of the MWRD’s Affirmative Action Committee and the Procurement Committee. In these roles, she actively works with the MWRD’s Diversity Section to seek ways to ensure that minority and women contractors are treated fairly and have an opportunity to perform work on MWRD contracts.

With the support of the Board of Commissioners, she took the lead in introducing changes to *(continued)*

## MWRD V.P. McGowan inducted into National Civil Rights Hall of Fame, *cont.*

the MWRD's MBE/WBE Affirmative Action Ordinance to include penalties for contractors that violate the ordinance. Throughout the year, the vice president reconvenes commissioners, staff and outside experts and stakeholders to strengthen the Affirmative Action Ordinance to ensure its transparency, inclusivity and opportunity for potential contractors. She also works with the Diversity Section to host Vendor Outreach Fairs in person and now virtually to connect these small businesses with the resources and contacts they need to grow.

Vice President McGowan also initiated the banking partnership with GN Bank (formerly ISF Bank) where the MWRD has \$4 million on deposit to aid its efforts to invest in the community and economic development in Chicago neighborhoods. She also took the lead on investing certificates of deposits with local African American community banks.

Every February she pulls together MWRD commissioners and staff with African America icons, African American community leaders, African American elected officials and students to host a series of Black History Month celebrations and events to educate all ages on the history and issues of the Civil Rights Movement. In 2020, at the Vice President's urging, the MWRD flew the African American flag for the entire month of February for the first time to celebrate Black



*Vice President Barbara McGowan coordinated the first-ever raising of the African American flag at the MWRD, ushering in Black History Month in February 2019. This event attracted dozens of Chicago dignitaries and educated the public about the importance of the flag and month.*

History Month. For her efforts as commissioner, Vice President McGowan has been recognized with more than a dozen awards, many for her exemplary support and commitment to the minority, women, and small business community.

“Congratulations to Vice President McGowan for being recognized as an inductee of the National Civil Rights Hall of Fame,” said MWRD Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet. “Having just been re-elected, I have watched the Vice President's commitment to fairness, inclusiveness and integrity over the past two years and hope to follow in her footsteps.”

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### ***Recovering Resources, Transforming Water***

*Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at [mwrdd.org](http://mwrdd.org).*