



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Commissioners sworn in to protect water environment

MWRD installs four commissioners: Martin J. Durkan and Josina Morita join Mariyana T. Spyropoulos and Barbara J. McGowan for induction ceremony

Four commissioners were installed Tuesday to govern the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) and continue augmenting the agency's pledge to recover resources and transform water.

Martin J. Durkan and Josina Morita joined the MWRD Board of Commissioners for the first time, along with incumbent leaders, President Mariyana T. Spyropoulos and Vice President Barbara J. McGowan. The MWRD is governed by a nine-member Board of Commissioners who are elected at large. Three commissioners are elected every two years for six-year terms, but because of a previous temporary appointment, a fourth commissioner—Durkan—was elected as well.

"This is a terrific day to take our oaths and commit to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and plan for a thriving water environment for our region," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "We welcome Commissioners Durkan and Morita to the Board and welcome back Vice President McGowan. We thank them for their service and look forward to achieving excellence for the District through our collaboration."

On Nov. 8, Commissioner Morita became the first Asian American elected county-wide in Cook County. Commissioner Morita is director of the United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations, a multiethnic alliance of community organizations working together across 30 communities in Cook County. She serves on the State of Illinois' Racial Profiling and Data Oversight Board, the Asian American Employment Plan Council and the city of Chicago's Commission on Equity. She also presides on the boards of the Woods Fund of Chicago and the Asian American Action Fund of Greater Chicago. In 2007, the Community Renewal Society named Commissioner Morita one of Chicago's "35 Under 35," fighting racism and poverty. In 2012, she was elected as

a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. The same year, she was selected as a Jim Edgar Fellow and a Leadership Greater Chicago Fellow. In 2013, she received the Emerging Leader Award from the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform and the Breaking Barriers Award from the Chicago Foundation for Women. Commissioner Morita's human rights and social justice work has been recognized by the Rainbow PUSH Coalition and the Japanese American Citizens League. She holds a master's degree in Urban Planning and Public Policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a B.A. in Sociology and International Race Relations from Pitzer College.

"I am excited about the opportunity to serve the taxpayers of Cook County and work with the staff at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago to improve and protect our water environment and push for innovative technologies to advance the District's resource recovery model," said Commissioner Morita. "I thank everyone for this welcome and look forward to getting to work."

Commissioner Durkan, who will be serving a two-year term, works as a business representative for International Union Operating Engineers Local 150, serving the working men and women of the union. Previous to his work with Local 150, Commissioner Durkan spent two decades in the construction trades and served on the Municipal Pension Board as a trustee protecting workers' retirement funds, in which he oversaw more than \$5 billion in workers' retirement savings. He operated heavy equipment, ran a small family business and represented union members across Cook County. Under his watch, Commissioner Durkan has dedicated his time to fighting for working families and protecting the environment, and he strives to support and prioritize both those areas as he joins the MWRD Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Durkan is a father of four and resides (*continued*)

Commissioners sworn in to protect water environment *(continued)*

with his wife Una, a school teacher, in the Edison Park neighborhood on Chicago's Northwest Side.

"I am ready to roll up my sleeves and immerse myself into the work of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago," said Commissioner Durkan. "I relish the opportunity to serve the taxpayers of Cook County and work with staff as responsible stewards of the water environment, protecting our homes and businesses from flooding and pursuing the beneficial recovery of natural resources."

President Mariyana Spyropoulos was first elected in 2010 and was later elected as chairman of finance in January 2013 and board president in January 2015. President Spyropoulos currently serves as chairman of three committees: Judiciary; Pension, Human Resources, and Civil Service; and Real Estate Development. She also serves as a Trustee on the Pension Board. In January 2011, the Board of Commissioners appointed her to the Public Building Commission. President Spyropoulos received her law degree from The John Marshall Law School and her MBA from Loyola University Chicago. She also completed graduate work in American government at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. With her attorney experience, she brings a unique legal and business perspective combined with environmental activism.

Vice President McGowan has served on the MWRD since 1998. She serves as chairman of the Affirmative Action Committee and the Procurement Committee, and vice chairman of the Pension, Human Resources and Civil Service Committee and the Public Information and Education Committee. Prior to serving as commissioner, Vice President McGowan worked as office manager of the Political Education Project created by the late Mayor Harold Washington, assistant to the Deputy Executive Director at the Chicago Housing Authority, and as a commissioner's aide at the MWRD. She was elected as a delegate to the 1996 Democratic Convention and was also a delegate to the 2000 Democratic Convention. As chairman of the Affirmative Action Committee, Vice President McGowan has worked to ensure that minority and women contractors have an opportunity to perform work on MWRD contracts and are treated fairly. With her fellow commissioners, she introduced changes to the MWRD's MBE/WBE Affirmative Action Ordinance to include penalties for contractors that violate the ordinance.

"I'm excited to start my fourth term and to include and work with Commissioners Durkan and Morita along with the rest of the Board to continue our efforts in protecting the water environment," said Vice President McGowan.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrld.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.