



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Media Advisory

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## First MWRD African American woman Commissioner, Nellie Jones, honored by Board of Commissioners

Nellie L. Jones, the first African American woman elected as a Commissioner at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), was honored with a resolution at MWRD headquarters that was presented to her family on December 1. Commissioner Jones' resolution was presented on the same day that the MWRD Board of Commissioners passed the agency's revised Affirmative Action ordinance, which is a fitting tribute to her legacy.

Commissioner Jones was first elected in 1976 and re-elected in 1982. During her tenure in office, she led the charge for the MWRD's first Affirmative Action program. This work sparked increased opportunities for minorities, including women, to secure contracts offered for public bidding. She was also instrumental in more African Americans taking Civil Service examinations for employment opportunities.

Commissioner Jones was a compassionate and thoughtful individual who used her natural abilities to build consensus around difficult issues. She worked diligently to represent the underserved by becoming a liaison and working toward the fair treatment of not only African Americans but all who felt mistreated.

Commissioner Jones began her career in public service while living at the Robert Taylor Homes at 3919 S. Federal beginning in 1962. She and her husband James Jones, Sr., were among the first families to move into the 16-story building. Her concern for her family and community lead her to become one of the first precinct captains in the development which prompted her career working with Chicago second ward Alderman William Barnett.

Commissioner Jones' grandson, Brian Kenner, served as an Aide to Commissioner Chakena D. Perry, continuing his family legacy of public service.

"It is such an honor to have worked with a relative of Commissioner Jones," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "Commissioner Jones paved the way and opened doors for so many people during a politically tumultuous period in our country's



*The family of Nellie L. Jones holds a resolution presented by the MWRD Board of Commissioners in the Board room on December 1, 2022.*

history. It was an honor to meet her family and present this resolution today. I thank Commissioner Perry for bringing this historical legend to our attention."

"It was great to see my grandmother's work as a commissioner to empower the communities she cared for uplifted with today's resolution and vote to update the Affirmative Action ordinance; she truly was a great woman," said Kenner. "I can only hope to live up to the example that she set for me and my family. My family is truly grateful to the board of commissioners for recognizing and uplifting her work."

"It is an honor to pay homage to the late Nellie L. Jones who paved the way for me, and so many others, to aspire to public office," said Commissioner Perry. "Honoring Commissioner Jones on the same day the Board unanimously passed our updated affirmative action ordinance was a momentous occasion, not just for the District, but for her family that witnessed it. I'm glad I was able to play a small part in honoring her legacy."

Commissioner Jones passed away in December 2001 at the age of 68. Her service to the MWRD will be forever appreciated and remembered.

*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).*