



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Commissioner Josina Morita receives honors from State Treasurer, Secretary of State



Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White and attorney Mike Kasper (on the right) present the Laura Liu Trailblazer Award to MWRD Commissioner Josina Morita.

In honor of Asian/Pacific Islander American Heritage Month, Illinois State Treasurer Mike Frerichs and Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White honored Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Commissioner Josina Morita in separate ceremonies held at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago, IL recently. Commissioner Morita received the Outstanding Elected Official Award from Treasurer Frerichs on May 7 and the Laura Liu Trailblazer Award from Secretary of State White on May 15. Laura Liu was the first Chinese-American judge in Illinois' history and the first Asian-American to serve on the Illinois Appellate Court. She died of complications from breast cancer in 2016.

"Generations of Asian and Pacific Islanders have enriched America's history, and I hope to live up to the expectations of those who have worked tirelessly to make a better life for themselves, their families and their communities," said Commissioner Morita.



MWRD Commissioner Josina Morita thanks IL State Treasurer Michael Frerichs (standing on the far left) for the Outstanding Elected Official Award.

According to the Library of Congress, Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month celebrates Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. Asian/Pacific encompasses all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island).

The idea of an Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month originated with Congress in 1977 and over time it evolved until 1992 when Congress passed Public Law 102-450 which designated the month of May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. May was selected based on history. The immigration of the first Japanese to the U.S. occurred on May 7, 1843, and the transcontinental (*continued*)

Commissioner Josina Morita receives honors *(continued)*

railroad was completed on May 10, 1869—Chinese immigrants laid the majority of the tracks.

“The Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month invites us to contemplate the struggles of Asian Pacific Americans. It challenges us to learn from our shared experiences. It demands of us the strength to move our country forward,” Frerichs said.

Commissioner Morita was the first Asian American elected county-wide in Cook County on Nov. 8, 2016. She serves as the MWRD Chairman of the Industrial Waste and Water Pollution Committee and the Public Information and Education Committee. She is also the Vice Chairman of the Information Technology, Procurement and State Legislation and Rules Committees.

Commissioner Morita formerly served as the Executive Director of the United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations, a multiethnic alliance of community and religious organizations working together across 30 communities in Cook County. She currently serves on the State of Illinois’ Racial Profiling and Data Oversight Board, and the Asian American Employment Plan Council. She also presides on the boards of the Woods Fund of Chicago, the Delta Institute and the Asian American Action Fund of Greater Chicago. 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.



MWRD Commissioner Josina Morita receives the Outstanding Elected Official award from IL State Treasurer Michael Frerichs.

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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 used water treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.