



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 21-2082, Version: 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF TERRENCE J. (TERRY) O'BRIEN

WHEREAS, Terrence J. (Terry) O'Brien, the former longtime president of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) who once ran for Cook County Board president, died February 28, 2021 after a lengthy illness. He was 64; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of Loyola Academy and John Carroll University, Mr. O'Brien was born and raised in Rogers Park and lived in Edgebrook. For more than four decades he worked for various consulting firms, managing engineering projects to protect the environment, including at K-Plus Engineering, which provided stormwater management, civil and environmental engineering, and construction administration services; and

WHEREAS, a Chicago native, Mr. O'Brien dedicated a third of his life to working to improve the region's water environment, serving on the MWRD Board of Commissioners for 24 years, from 1988 to 2012, and as president from 1997 through the end of his tenure. He followed the footsteps of his father William O'Brien, a painter leadman, and grandfather John Hickey, an operating engineer, becoming the third-generation of O'Briens to work at the agency's Skokie sewage-treatment facility at 3500 W. Howard Street. In November 2012, his fellow commissioners and staff commemorated his service by renaming the North Side Water Reclamation Plant the Terrence J. O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant; and

WHEREAS, during his 24 years as commissioner, President O'Brien never missed a meeting. He was integral in improving the water quality in the Chicago River and area waterways; protecting the source of drinking water in Lake Michigan; advancing the MWRD's Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP); spearheading legislative efforts to recognize the MWRD as the regional stormwater authority for Cook County to address flooding; helping create the MWRD's Information Technology Department; instituting a pollution hotline to report illegal dumping; and demonstrating remarkable financial stewardship to prepare future stability at the MWRD for generations to come. During his tenure as board president the agency had a budget that exceeded \$1 billion and employed more than 2,100 workers. Further as President, O'Brien helped the MWRD maintain a AAA bond rating, marketed MWRD real estate to introduce new revenue streams, and abated more than \$262 million, returning it to Cook County property owners while still offering them an essential yet affordable wastewater treatment service; and

WHEREAS, President O'Brien's project management skills stemmed from a long career in environmental and civil engineering. This helped him bring extensive knowledge to the MWRD to enhance, streamline and deliver many essential projects at the least possible cost to taxpayers. Under his leadership, the MWRD secured more than \$800 million in funding to complete the first phase of TARP, constructing and putting into operation 109 miles of deep tunnels to collect storm water and polluted water and prevent it from backing up into basements, streets and waterways; and

WHEREAS, Kari K. Steele, the president of the MWRD Board of Commissioners, said in a written statement: "It was President O'Brien's leadership and principles that carved a path for all of us to protect public health and our water environment and (to) provide (the) excellent, innovative and reliable service that taxpayers across Cook County deserve. We are forever grateful for his 24 years of service and dedication to the people of Cook County and our environment. His family legacy will forever be instilled in the work of the MWRD;" and

WHEREAS, in 2016, he founded the O'Brien Network, LLC, which offered business development, governmental relations, consulting and strategic services; and

WHEREAS, he also was a longtime 16-inch softball player and was inducted into the Chicago 16-Inch Softball Hall of Fame in 2006. He gave park districts leases of Water Reclamation District property for softball fields and arranged the transfer of Thillens Stadium, the iconic home to amateur softball and baseball at Devon Avenue along the North Shore Channel, to the Chicago Park District; and

WHEREAS, President O'Brien is survived by his wife Julie and three children Kevin, Therese and Patrick.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County, honors the life and contributions of the **TERRENCE J. (TERRY) O'BRIEN**, and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions he has made to the Citizens of Cook County, Illinois; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and that an official copy of the same be tendered to the family of the **TERRENCE J. (TERRY) O'BRIEN**.