

Utility Leaders Afternoon Bios

Leading Utilities of the World Inauguration Ceremony

Kari K. Steele

President

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago



Kari K. Steele was elected November 6, 2012, to her first term as a Commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) and re-elected in 2018 and 2024. In January 2019, she became the first African American woman in the more than 130-year history of the MWRD to be elected by the Board of Commissioners to serve as President. She is currently serving her third term.

President Steele currently serves as the Chairman for the Affirmative Action and Maintenance & Operations committees. She is Vice Chairman of the Federal Legislation and Pension, Human Resources and Civil Service committees. In 2023, she was selected to serve as a board member on the Public Building Commission of Chicago and as a trustee for the MWRD Retirement Fund.

President Steele is a chemist, environmentalist, licensed real estate broker, and a community leader. She has more than 11 years of experience working as a chemist. She started her career at MWRD as an intern, working as a water sampler and lab technician. She also has experience working as a water chemist for the City of Chicago Department of Water Management's Jardine Water Purification Plant. This background makes President Steele uniquely qualified to discuss and analyze proposed operational changes and operational efficiencies. She is the first and only chemist serving on the MWRD Board of Commissioners. President Steele was recognized by Crain's Chicago Business in the 2023 Notable Women in STEM feature.

President Steele is a diligent community servant who is often acknowledged for her vast public service. She has humbly been the recipient of the following awards and recognitions: the Richard Barnett Legacy Award (2007), City of Dixmoor's Humanitarian Award (2012), Outstanding Woman Elected Official (2014), Brookfield Zoo's Outstanding Community Partner (2015), Hometown Hero Award (2017), UIC Freshwater Lab Water Award (2017), Outstanding Public Official of the Year (2019), Congressional History Makers (2019), Trailblazers Award (2019), Black History Champion Award (2019), Women Making History (2019), Ida Platt Award (2019), Crescent Moon Award (2019), National Civil Rights Hall of Fame Inductee (2020), NWEA Public Official Award (2022), Phenomenal Woman Award (2022), Rich Township & Village of Matteson's History Makers Award (2023), Trailblazing Women in Finance Award (2024), National Baptist State Convention Certificate of Excellence (2024), and the God First Ministries Leadership Award (2024).

She is also a member of State Treasurer Michael Frerichs' African American Advisory Committee, the 8th Ward Women's Auxiliary Council, the Sierra Club, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the 27th Ward Regular Democratic Organization, Independent Voters of Illinois – Independent Precinct Organization (IVI-IPO), Southside Democracy for America, and the West Side Black Elected Officials. President Steele is proud to have served as past president of the 6th Ward Young Democrats; past Chairman and Treasurer of the Young Democrats of Cook County; and past member of the Society of Cosmetic Chemists.

President Kari K. Steele earned a Pre-Medicine Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from Xavier University of Louisiana. She has successfully completed the Illinois Women's Institute for Leadership Training Academy (2007); the University of Illinois Institute for Government and Politics Edgar Fellows Program (2014); and the Metropolitan Leadership Institute (2016).

Randi Jenkins
Assistant Director
Austin Water



Randi Jenkins serves as the Assistant Director of Customer Experience at Austin Water, where she leads efforts to enhance customer satisfaction across all touchpoints within the utility. She oversees several key divisions, including Advanced Metering technology and related field operations, Customer Services, Customer Insights and Solutions, the Utility Permitting Office, the Emergency Call Center, the Public Information Office, and Utility Compliance Services.

Randi began her public service career with the City of Austin in 2006. Over the years, she has held leadership roles in Economic Development, Development Services, and now Austin Water, where she focuses on fostering strong relationships with customers and the broader community.

She holds both a Master's and Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Business and Economics from Sam Houston State University.

Utility Leaders Hot Topics Panel:
Building Symbiotic Partnerships Between Utilities and Industry

Calvin D. Farr, Jr.
General Manager & CEO
Prince William Water



Calvin D. Farr, Jr. is the General Manager & CEO of Prince William Water. Prince William Water is the largest combined water and wastewater authority in Virginia and serves more than 380,000 people in Prince William County, one of the fastest growing and most diverse communities in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area. Mr. Farr leads an award-winning organization and a nationally recognized model for performance excellence and industry best practices, including workplace culture, operational optimization, infrastructure investments, and financial viability.

Mr. Farr has extensive leadership experience in the water and wastewater industry and serves on several national industry boards, focused on legislative and regulatory policy advocacy and One Water strategies. He is the current Chairman of the Board of Directors for the U.S. Water Alliance.

Mr. Farr holds an Executive Masters of Public Management from the University of Maryland, a Masters of Environmental Engineering from the Johns Hopkins University, and a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the Old Dominion University.

Melissa Aquino

Senior Vice President and Chief Segment Officer, Water Quality
Veralto



Senior Vice President and Chief Segment Officer, Water Quality

Melissa Aquino leads Veralto's Water Quality segment, where she and her team are on a mission to safeguard one of the world's most vital resources — water.

From ensuring water safety and addressing scarcity to enabling responsible water management and climate resilience, Melissa's leadership spans the entire water continuum.

With a foundation in engineering, Melissa leads with curiosity, clarity of purpose, and a deep personal connection to the industry – driven by a commitment to meaningful impact and thoughtful problem-solving.

Melissa brings more than 25 years of diversified leadership across Veralto and Danaher. Most recently, she served as President of Cepheid during a period of rapid growth and expansion. She also held leadership roles as President of Leica Biosystems and McCrometer, and as Vice President of the Danaher Business System Office.

Her experience in the water quality space runs deep. At Hach, Melissa held a Product Manager role and later served as Business Unit Director for the U.S., France, and Germany. During her time at Hach, she launched a product focused on recycling hazardous chemicals for customers. She began her career at Procter & Gamble, where she spent several years in R&D Process Engineering and Market Research.

Melissa is passionate about associate engagement and serves on the board of Arise Wellness, a nonprofit focused on health and mental services for abused women, reflecting her dedication to both professional excellence and personal advocacy.

She holds a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the Colorado School of Mines and an MBA from the University of Colorado. Melissa lives in Colorado with her family.

Mickey Conway
CEO
Metro Water Recovery



The Metro Water Recovery Board of Directors named Mickey CEO in January 2018. Prior to becoming CEO, Mickey served as Metro's General Counsel for four years.

Mickey is a 1994 cum laude graduate from the University of San Francisco School of Law. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from Southern Methodist University in 1988.

He currently serves as a President of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) representing Region 8. He is also a member of the One Water Council of the U.S. Water Alliance and the Water Research Foundation (WRF) Board, as well as a number of other committees and groups relating to the wastewater/water sectors.

Bernard Koh
Assistant Chief Executive
Singapore PUB



Mr Bernard Koh is the Assistant Chief Executive of PUB, Singapore's National Water Agency. He oversees PUB's Future Systems and Technology cluster to future-proof the water systems by leveraging on Research & Development (R&D) to accelerate the deployment of technologies in PUB for operational efficiency, decarbonisation and resource circularity. He also oversees the industry collaboration strategies by supporting the growth of water companies and in their commercialisation effort.

He has extensive operational experience across the entire engineering value chain, including operation and maintenance of Water Treatment Plants, NEWater Factories and Desalination Plants. He led the Water Systems Unit which was responsible for the reliability, resilience and optimisation of PUB's operations at the system level. He was also involved in project management of large infrastructure projects.

Bernard graduated with a Bachelors' Degree in Electrical Engineering from Nanyang Technological University and a Masters in Electrical Engineering from National University of Singapore. He is a registered Professional Electrical Engineer with the Singapore Professional Engineers Board and a Chartered Engineer (Systems Engineering) with the Institution of Engineers Singapore.

Anna Murray, General Manager Barwon Asset Solutions

Appointed June 2023

As General Manager Barwon Asset Solutions, Anna is responsible for ensuring the success of **Barwon Asset Solutions**, a 100% locally-based maintenance services company, and a wholly owned subsidiary of Barwon Water.

Barwon Asset Solutions is an exciting initiative inspired through Barwon Water's 2030 strategic vision of enabling regional prosperity with a focus on entrepreneurship and affordability. In partnership with local business and agencies, Barwon Asset Solutions is building regional capability, enhancing productivity and creating jobs and opportunity, while maintaining affordable pricing for Barwon Water customers.

With over 20 years' experience across operational, maintenance and reliability roles delivering essential services to customers and community, Anna is a dynamic leader who leverages the strengths of her team to enable best business outcomes. Anna is an advocate for women in traditionally male-dominated roles, providing mentoring and coaching to females within the industry.

