



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
TODD SPITZER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

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**Moulton Niguel Water District President Duane Cave Pleads Guilty to Falsifying
Nomination Paperwork to Run for
Re-election when he Lied about Living within the Water District Boundaries
Orange County District Attorney's Office Demanded Cave
Immediately Resign from Moulton Niguel Water District.**

SANTA ANA, Calif. – SANTA ANA, Calif. – The president of the Moulton Niguel Water District, Duane D. Cave, pleaded guilty today to one misdemeanor count of falsifying nomination paperwork in July 2024 when he illegally claimed he lived within the water district's boundaries.

Cave, who was elected to serve on the Moulton Niguel Water District through 2028, has been a member of the district's board for the last decade. To coincide with his guilty plea of misleading voters that he was eligible to serve on the Board of Directors, Cave submitted today his resignation from the Moulton Niguel Water District, effective on or before November 20.

The Moulton Niguel Water District delivers drinking water, recycled water, and wastewater services to more than 170,000 customers in Laguna Niguel, Aliso Viejo, Mission Viejo, Laguna Hills, Dana Point, and San Juan Capistrano. Members of the Moulton Niguel Water District Board of Directors are required to live within the district's boundaries.

The Orange County District Attorney's Office began investigating complaints into Duane's residency violations following a resident complaint in October 2024.

The investigation revealed that on July 19, 2024, Cave signed candidate nomination paperwork under penalty of perjury that he lived within the water district's boundaries, but in reality, Cave had been renting out his Aliso Viejo home since October 2022 while living with his wife in Rancho Santa Margarita, which is outside of the service area of the water district.

Today, Cave pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor count of filing fraudulent nomination papers and was sentenced to 160 hours of community service and one year of informal probation. Cave was re-elected to the Moulton Niguel Water District in November 2024.

"For a candidate to lie to get on the ballot is not just committing a crime, it is robbing the people of their most precious right, their voice of who they want to represent them, to protect them, and to fight for all their

other rights,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. “Elected officials are elected to represent the communities where they live and Duane Cave does not deserve to represent the customers of the Moulton Niguel Water District because he doesn’t live there. As the elected District Attorney of Orange County, I refuse to allow our electoral process to be subverted and exploited by anyone. The Orange County District Attorney’s Office remains fiercely committed to investigating and prosecuting election fraud to ensure the voice of every Orange County resident is heard when they cast their ballot.”

Deputy District Attorney Heather Heslep-Morrissey of the Special Prosecutions Unit prosecuted this case.

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