HUGH NGUYEN
CLERK-RECORDER

BIOGRAPHY

BIRTH AND DEATH RECORDS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAMES
MARRIAGE LICENSES/RECORDS
NOTARY REGISTRATION
ORANGE COUNTY ARCHIVES
PASSPORTS
PROPERTY RECORDS



Orange County Clerk-Recorder Hugh Nguyen was born in Vietnam in 1967. As a child, he was told by his mother that his father was an American soldier who was killed in action while serving his country. In 2018, after an almost 50-year search and a DNA submission to ancestry.com, Hugh miraculously found his father who is very much alive and resides in Tennessee. Hugh was brought to America at the age of seven by his grandparents and his aunt who raised him. His journey to America began in 1975 aboard the USS Midway which took him from the Philippines to Guam and then to El Toro Air Base ending up at Camp Pendleton in California. Eventually, Hugh moved to El Centro and finally to Orange County in 1979. He graduated from Saddleback High School, attended Santa Ana College, and completed Orange County's Management Academy Program at Chapman University.

On April 2, 2013, Hugh was selected by the Board of Supervisors to fill the remaining term of office for Clerk-Recorder through December 2014. Hugh was selected after an extensive recruitment process in which 900 people applied for the vacant Clerk-Recorder position. The Supervisors selected Hugh due to his experience, hands on management style, and desire to serve the public.

In June 2014, Hugh was elected to his first four-year term as Orange County Clerk-Recorder. Upon taking the oath of office, he became the first Vietnamese American elected countywide as Orange County Clerk-Recorder and the first Vietnamese American elected to the office of County Clerk-Recorder in the nation. Hugh was re-elected in 2018 and again in 2022. In June 2026, he earned a decisive and historic re-election victory to a fourth term, receiving 72 percent of the vote, and will continue serving the residents of Orange County through 2030.

In 1993, Hugh was hired by the late County Clerk Gary Granville. During his first year at the County Clerk's office, he worked in customer services for marriage licensing, fictitious business names, notary registration, and environmental impact report filings. In 1998, Mr. Granville promoted Hugh to the position of Chief Deputy Recorder in which he served through 2006. From 2006 until his appointment to the position of Clerk-Recorder, Hugh was the Assistant Clerk of the Board expanding his management, budget, HR, and purchasing expertise while gaining valuable experience in dealing with the Board of Supervisors and county operations. Hugh has served the County of Orange for more than three decades, including approximately 26 years with the Clerk-Recorder Department.

In 2022, Hugh was awarded the Leadership in Public Service Award from the Orange County Business Council in which he was recognized for his implementation of numerous tax-cutting and streamlining initiatives such as the expansion of the South County branch office, Hitched at Honda Center, and reduction of passport photo fees. He was named one of Orange County's 100 Most Influential by the Orange County Register in 2015 and again in 2020 for his efforts in making his department's services more accessible to working families and for his department's innovative Hitched at Honda Center program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual 100 Most Influential list includes individuals who have influenced business, culture, education, food, giving, government, health, inspiration, science, and sports. Under his leadership, his department received multiple CSAC and NACo Awards for the innovations Hugh has ushered in.

Hugh has lived in Orange County since 1979 and lives with his wife and children in the City of Santa Ana.

Hugh's Goals for the Department include:

- Provide "hands-on" management and leading by example.
- Operate the Department in a cost-effective manner.
- Protect and safeguard the County's public records.
- Maintain a comprehensive security and backup plan for all systems and records.
- Provide a supportive work environment and leadership to staff.
- Increase the accessibility of services for the public at branch offices and Saturday openings.
- Maintain open communications with the business community for title and mortgage recordings.

Hugh's Accomplishments During his Tenure:

- Launched fully operational "Clerk-Recorder on Wheels" Mobile Unit to provide services throughout Orange County in March 2025.
- Partnered with the California Secretary of State to host the Apostille Pop-up Shop in 2024, enhancing accessibility to document authentication services for county residents.
- Launched service allowing couples to live stream their ceremonies globally from Old Orange County Courthouse in 2024.
- Launched interactive Chatbot for instant customer support in March 2024.
- Launched services allowing couples to live stream their ceremonies globally from North County and South County branch offices in 2023.
- Opened an expansion suite in May 2022 at the South County branch office to address the increasing demand for services and provide a more efficient and smooth process for customers. The new suite offers a bigger wedding ceremony room and expands document recording services, eliminating the need for lunch closures.
- Saved taxpayers money by reducing the fee for passport photos from $10 to $7 in 2022.
- Spearheaded Orange County Archives project to preserve 640 original historical volumes of property deeds dating from 1889 to 1926, ensuring the survival of these original and historical records for many future generations to come.
- Reached a milestone during October 2021 in electronic recording history by surpassing ten million electronically submitted and recorded documents - maintaining the department as a nationwide industry leader since 1997.
- Launched award-winning "Hitched at Honda Center" program in April 2020 as a response to COVID-19 lockdowns allowing couples from all over the world to safely obtain marriage licenses and civil marriage ceremonies. At the time, the department was the only Clerk's office in the state, possibly the country, offering services through the pandemic.
- Relocated the department's North County Branch Office from Fullerton to Anaheim in February 2019, maximizing taxpayers' dollars by doubling the office's space and offering customers expanded marriage services with two ceremony rooms, document recording services, and passport services.
- Reached a milestone during May 2019 in electronic recording history by surpassing nine million electronically submitted and recorded documents - maintaining the department as a nationwide industry leader since 1997.
- Implemented multi award-winning Special Saturday Openings for over five years making the department's services more accessible and convenient for working families and busy individuals.
- Launched the department's award-winning O.C. Weddings mobile app allowing customers to both complete a marriage license application and to set an appointment for a civil marriage ceremony - all from the convenience of any mobile device.
- Saved taxpayers money by reducing the fee for passport photos from $15 to $10 in 2017.
- Implemented award-winning Auto-Indexing and Redaction Project of real property documents in 2016 - making recorded documents available to the public two days after recording.

- Implemented a multiple award-winning Government to Government (G2G) component to the department's SECURE electronic recording system in 2015 - giving government agencies the ability to submit recordable documents electronically.
- Implemented a new Electronic Fictitious Business Name Statement application and filing system - making the process more user friendly and reducing the duration of phone calls regarding FBN issues received by the department.
- Opened a passport and marriage services unit at the County Community Service Center in Westminster.
- Opened a passport services office at the Laguna Hills branch office to serve south county residents.
- Implemented electronic processing of check payments received from title companies helping reduce processing times, saving staff time, and increasing efficiency by reducing manual check processing from 90% to 11%.
- Saved over $3 million in salary and benefits since becoming Clerk-Recorder in 2013.
- Expedited the availability of birth and death certificates from 60 days to 30 days.
- Rolled out public terminals with touch screen technology at all the department's locations - making it easier for people to complete their applications for services without having to hassle with a keyboard and a mouse.
- Launched a pilot program to expedite the ordering of marriage certificates at the department's Old County Courthouse Marriage Services Unit - eliminating the need for couples to return to the office to purchase their marriage certificate or having to order it via mail, reducing the number of calls to the department's information line and helping to shorten lines and waiting times at the department's offices.
- Streamlined real property recording services at the department's Fullerton and Laguna Hills branch offices by adding an experienced recordable document examiner at each location.
- Digitized and converted 210 volumes of property indexes from 1889-1953 that are kept at the Orange County Archives to microfilm.
- Completed an extensive conservation of 210 volumes of property indexes from 1889-1953 including the most damaged deeds kept at the Orange County Archives.
- In September 2014, became the first recorder's office in the nation to process and record over seven million electronically submitted documents - making the department the nationwide leader in electronic recording.
- Implemented policies and procedures for department staff to improve customer service.
- Strengthened accounting oversight by implementing stronger internal controls and documentation.
- Improved customer service by increasing weekday business hours at the department's branch offices making them more convenient to the public.
- Recruited additional experienced staff for the Clerk-Recorder's financial group.
- Recruited additional experienced staff to strengthen the Clerk-Recorder's purchasing group.
- Restructured the department's senior leadership to strengthen efficiency and oversight.

Awards and Recognitions Under Hugh's Leadership

- In 2026, received a Rose Award from the Orange County Taxpayers Association for the department's innovative mobile unit, Clerk-Recorder on Wheels, saving taxpayers money and time.
- In 2026, Clerk-Recorder offices are recognized by Yelp as among the highest-rated and best reviewed businesses on the platform
- In 2026, received a National Achievement Award from the National Association of Counites (NACo) for "Clerk-Recorder on Wheels: Reimagining Access to County Services."
- In 2025, received a National Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for "CRBot: Orange County Clerk-Recorder's Solution for 24/7 Instant Customer Support."
- In 2024, received the National Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties for the department's "Bridging Distances for Love: Virtual Marriage Ceremony Initiative."

- In 2023, received the National Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties for the department's passport services program for "Reducing Costs and Increasing Efficiency."
- In 2022, received the Orange County Business Council Turning Red Tape into Red Carpet Award for Leadership in Public Service.
- In 2021, received the prestigious Innovation Award from the California State Association of Counties for the department's Hitched at Honda Center program.
- In 2021, received two National Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties for the department's COVID-19: Hitched at Honda Center through Marriage Services and COVID-19: Hitched with Virtual Wedding Services.
- In 2020, received a National Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties for the department's OC Weddings mobile app in the category of Information Technology.
- In 2020, was named one of Orange County's 100 Most Influential by The Orange County Register.
- In 2019, received a National Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties for the department's G2G - Government to Government component in the category of Information Technology.
- In 2018, received a California Association of Counties Merit Award in recognition of the department's G2G: Government to Government Recordings Made Easy submission in the category of Government Finance, Administration & Technology.
- In 2018, received a Rose Award from the Orange County Taxpayer's Association for the department's innovation and services while saving taxpayers money.
- In 2018, was nominated by the Orange County Business Council for its Turning Red Tape into Red Carpet Award in the Leadership in Public Service and Business Retention categories.
- In 2018, was awarded the County Elected Official of the Year by the Republican Party of Orange County.
- In 2018, received the Community Award for Leadership from Westcliff University.
- In 2018, received an Orange County Taxpayer Watchdog Award from the Office of the Orange County Auditor-Controller's Office.
- In 2017, received a National Association of Counties Achievement Award in recognition of the department's Auto-Indexing and Redaction – Increasing the Accuracy and Access to the Public Records Program.
- In 2017, was nominated by the Orange County Business Council for the Turning Red Tape into Red Carpet Award for its Auto-Indexing and Redaction Project.
- In 2015, was named one of Orange County's 100 Most Influential by The Orange County Register.
- In 2015, received a National Association of Counties Achievement Award in recognition of the department's Special Saturday Hours – Increasing Access to Better Serve the Public Program.
- In 2014, received a California Association of Counties Challenge Merit Award in recognition of the department's Special Saturday Hours.