



For Immediate Release

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WRD Statement on the Passing of Director Willard H. Murray, Jr.

Lakewood, CA (December 21, 2021)-Longtime WRD Director Willard H. Murray, Jr. passed away peacefully of natural causes on December 20, 2021. He was 91 years old. Murray was elected to the WRD Board in 1998 and served two terms as President. Murray also served for 10 years on the board of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

“We have lost a beloved member of the WRD family,” WRD Board President John Allen said. “During Willard’s tenure, WRD built recycled water plants in Long Beach and Pico Rivera, a desalter in Torrance, and many facilities throughout the district to remediate contaminated groundwater. He was an early champion and advocate of WRD’s Water Independence Now (WIN) initiative to eliminate reliance on imported water to meet the district’s replenishment needs.

“Willard made an indelible imprint on water supply reliability in Southern California. The region and state are lasting beneficiaries of his many contributions.”

“Willard was a big part of WRD’s history,” Director Rob Katherman added, “and the benefits of his service will be part of his legacy for years to come. But his service to Los Angeles and the region goes back to the 1960s when Willard was an early and forceful civil rights advocate who became the first African American to serve in the administration of Mayor Sam Yorty. That is a part of his legacy we should not forget.”

“Willard was more than a colleague to me,” Director Sergio Calderon said. “He was a friend and mentor who taught me a lot about the water world and WRD’s place in it. His passing is a loss for WRD and the region. I will always treasure the memories of his friendship.”

“For over 35 years Willard was a trusted friend and colleague,” Director Vera Robles DeWitt said. “One thing to know is that he was a stickler for proper parliamentary procedure, often reminding colleagues in a friendly way of the finer points of Robert’s Rules of Order. We will miss his sense of humor and outsized presence on the board.”

Prior to his election to the WRD Board, Murray was a four-term member of the California State Assembly. The Legislature honored his many contributions by naming a segment of the 91 Freeway after him.

WRD named its Board Room after Murray in 2018. Earlier this year, he was designated as President Emeritus of the WRD Board.

For over 60 years The Water Replenishment District (WRD) has managed and protected groundwater resources in two of the most utilized groundwater basins in the nation. Groundwater from these basins provides nearly half of the drinking water for 4 million residents in 43 cities of southern Los Angeles County. Through WRD’s Water Independence Now (WIN) Program, the District has developed a resilient and locally sustainable source of water for groundwater replenishment.