



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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Note to editors: A digital photograph of John V. Foley is available upon request.

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JOHN V. FOLEY, TWO-TIME CHAIRMAN OF METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, RESPECTED WATER LEADER, PASSES AWAY

John V. “Jack” Foley, an admired Orange County water leader who served two separate turns as chairman of the board of directors of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, has died.

Foley, the 17th board chairman in Metropolitan’s 86-year history and retired U.S. Army colonel, was surrounded by family members when he passed away Friday at his Laguna Niguel home after a battle with cancer. He was 83.

At the time of his death, Foley was serving his second two-year term as Metropolitan’s chairman. He also previously presided as chairman from December 1993 through 1998. One of the longest tenured Metropolitan directors, he represented the Municipal Water District of Orange County since August 1989.

“The water community has lost a wise and thoughtful voice of reason that will be sorely missed in the coming years as we make decisions that will shape water policy for future generations,” said Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger, who directed the Metropolitan flag to be flown at half-staff at all district facilities in Foley’s honor.

“Jack was a consummate gentleman who knew how to bring people together to solve big problems and advance real solutions,” he said. “We extend our heartfelt sympathies to his wife, Mary Jane, and his family.”

Kightlinger noted Foley was first elected chairman in the wake of the 1987-92 drought, which in 1991 triggered shortages and rationing throughout the Southland for the first time in district history.

“Water managers at that time expected imported supplies from Northern California and the Colorado River to meet two-thirds of all our regional demands, regardless of the weather. The drought, however, served as the necessary wake-up call for change,” Kightlinger said.

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Under Foley's leadership, Metropolitan's board initiated a public process that spanned more than two-and-a-half years of workshops and meetings, culminating in 1996 with the adoption of Metropolitan's Integrated Resources Plan.

"Jack always thought the IRP was a genuine breakthrough for the water industry," Kightlinger said. "Instead of relying primarily on imported water, through the IRP, Metropolitan chose to expand conservation and diversify its water supply portfolio with local resource investments like water recycling, groundwater recovery and expanded storage, which allowed more water to be captured in wet years for use during dry years."

The investment in storage was highlighted in 1995 when the district, under Foley's leadership, broke ground on construction of Diamond Valley Lake in southwest Riverside County, the largest reservoir in Southern California.

The importance of storage has been evident in Foley's latest turn as chair. Despite current unprecedented drought conditions, Metropolitan is meeting all regional imported water demands in 2014 by tapping its stored reserves and avoiding mandatory cutbacks.

"Everyone in Southern California owes Jack Foley a large measure of gratitude for the leadership and wisdom he provided, and also the incredible grace and unpretentious character he demonstrated in leading this agency to new levels of supply reliability," Kightlinger said.

Foley retired as general manager of the Moulton Niguel Water District, serving all or part of five cities in south Orange County, in 2008. He previously served as general manager of the Aliso Water Management Agency, from 1976 to 1979.

A key figure in water and sanitation matters at local, regional and state levels, he was appointed a member of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board by then-Gov. George Deukmejian in 1986 and chaired the board for two years. In February 1994, he was appointed by then-Gov. Pete Wilson to serve on the Bay/Delta Oversight Council and was subsequently appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Interior to serve on the Bay Delta Advisory Council.

During his Metropolitan tenure, Foley represented the district on the Colorado River Board of California. He was a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers. He also was past president of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Society of American Military Engineers.

A U.S. Army veteran of two wars, Foley's last military assignment was as district engineer in five southwestern states for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers until his retirement in 1976.

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Earlier, he commanded a company during the Korean War and a battalion in Thailand during the Vietnam conflict. He also served in the office of the chief of staff and as chief of public affairs for the Army chief of engineers in Washington, D.C.

He earned a bachelor's degree in engineering from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, a master's in civil engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a second master's in mathematics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He served as an assistant professor of mathematics at West Point. He also graduated from the Army Command and General Staff College and the U.S. Naval War College.

Foley is survived by his wife, Mary Jane Forster-Foley; a son, John V. Foley III of Sun Valley, Idaho; a daughter, Ann Ziegler of Laguna Niguel; two stepdaughters, Christa Brown of Houston, Texas and Alicia Eddy of Torrance; a stepson, Carlos Forster of San Francisco; and five step-grandchildren.

In acknowledgement of his military service, Foley will be interred at West Point. A celebration of life event is planned at a date to be determined.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the West Point Association of Graduates at 698 Mills Road, West Point, N.Y 10996 or <http://www.westpointforusall.org/waystogive.html>.

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving nearly 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.