

IN MEMORIAM: FORMER CALTAX PRESIDENT KIRK WEST



Kirk West, who served as president of the California Taxpayers Association from 1974 to 1982, and president of the California Chamber of Commerce from 1986 to 1997, died June 2 following a battle with cancer. He was 79.

“California taxpayers have lost a true friend and champion,” CalTax President Teresa Casazza said. “Even in retirement, Kirk was a valuable consultant and mentor for many members of the business community, always with a smile on his face and a positive outlook.”

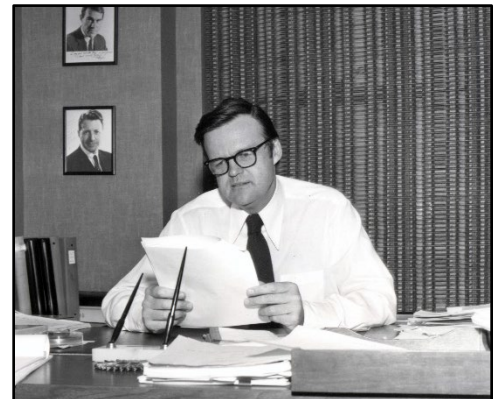
At the CalTax Annual Meeting in 2011, CalTax presented Mr. West (photo, left, from the event) with a lifetime achievement award for his work on behalf of taxpayers.

Before joining CalTax, Mr. West played a major role in shaping California tax policy in his role as chief deputy controller of California, representing Controller Houston Flournoy on more than 20 boards and commissions, and overseeing the operations of the Controller’s Office.

He previously served as deputy director of the Department of Finance under Governor Ronald Reagan, assistant to the secretary of resources, senior consultant to the Assembly Republican Caucus, and research director for the Republican State Central Committee. He also was a member of the San Juan Unified School District Board.

In the early 1980s, Mr. West was a member of a White House task force that studied federal functions and revenue sources that could be returned to the states.

The 1970s and 1980s were a tumultuous time for California taxpayers, with property tax reform, government employee unionization and government spending limits among the issues of interest to CalTax. In 1975, Mr. West praised a proposal by Governor Jerry Brown to reduce salaries of Cabinet-level officers, writing: “On behalf of the California Taxpayers Association I wish to commend you for your state objective of avoiding a general tax increase in 1975. We will do whatever we can to assist you by suggesting economies in various state expenditure programs. We approve of your intent to set an example of austerity by cutting the governor’s office budget and using a less expensive automobile.”



Mr. West left CalTax at the beginning of 1983 to accept an appointment by Governor George Deukmejian to serve as secretary of the state Business, Transportation and Housing Agency. He later took the leadership position at the CalChamber, and eventually retired in 1997.

Mr. West was born in China, and sometimes surprised people by speaking in Chinese. He was a graduate of Stanford University, and held a master’s degree in political science from the University of California at Berkeley.