

*** For Immediate Release ***



August 18, 2017
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OUR REGION LOST A GUIDESTAR

Former State Assemblyman and Senator Ross Johnson Passes Away

With the passing of Ross Johnson Wednesday, our region lost a profoundly important visionary. Elected in 1978 to the State Assembly, he quickly made it known that he was interested in helping to establish a State Park in the hills above Yorba Linda and east of Brea. He once remarked that he saw a future that he did not like as he drove along the 91 freeway, watching the hills develop in Yorba Linda. He believed we needed to set aside some of the land. He said, "It is what civilized societies do."

From the earliest days of the first strategic acquisitions of land through the ground breaking acquisition of Coal Canyon in 2001, he carried the ball in the Legislature in establishing Chino Hills State Park. Ross once said "You can work miracles in Sacramento if you don't care who gets the credit." And he did just that. Today, the 14,107 acre Chino Hills State Park lies at the juncture of three of California's most populous counties. Much of this is because of the tenacity, effectiveness, and faithfulness of Ross Johnson.

As a Republican, he worked across party lines to garner funding for the State Park. As an elected representative, he worked with Hills For Everyone volunteers to figure out which willing seller should be lined up next. There have been 34 acquisitions over 36 years, making it the most complicated set of acquisitions in state park history. Ross traded away favors to get more funding to establish this wonderful resource for all of California. The job is not done; the eastern ridgeline in the City of Chino Hills remains vulnerable to development.

Ross did not shy away from other environmental issues either. He worked to remedy the toxic McColl dump site in Fullerton. He worked to garner funding for Upper Newport Bay. He made it safe for other Republicans, if they chose, to protect the environment.

Hills For Everyone Executive Director Claire Schlotterbeck remarked, "There would be no park without Ross. He was faithful in every way—at every moment. Whenever we needed him, he was there. When you look at the hills tonight please say a prayer for his family and send aloft a prayer of gratitude that this very special human being came our way and secured this gift of beauty and respite."

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