



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Gina DePinto (714) 378-3228, [gdepinto@ocwd.com](mailto:gdepinto@ocwd.com)

### **WATER INDUSTRY LOSES A GREAT LEADER**

#### ***The Orange County Water District Board and Staff Mourns the Untimely Loss of First Vice President, Director Wes Bannister.***

**FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (REVISED Dec. 14, 2009)** – In the late hours of December 10, 2009, the water world and Orange County lost an important trailblazer and public servant, as Wesley “Wes” Mastin Bannister lost his battle with cancer. Wes Bannister was elected to the Orange County Water District (OCWD) Board of Directors in 1991 representing Division 6, which includes Fountain Valley, Huntington Beach and parts of Westminster. He was re-elected to four consecutive four-year terms in 1996, 2001, 2004 and 2008. He was elected in 2007 and 2008 by his fellow board members to serve as the District’s 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President.

“The Board and staff of the Orange County Water District have lost an incredible leader who lived and breathed water,” stated OCWD Board President Stephen R. Sheldon. “Those who had the privilege of working with Wes know that he had the tenacity to get to the core of critical issues and drive and inspire others to do what was right and economically sound. He stood true to his principles and convictions, like no other person. We are truly sorry for his family’s great loss.”

During his tenure as a Board Member, the District celebrated many important achievements including the building and operation of the Groundwater Replenishment (GWR) System, the largest water purification project of its kind in the world, and the state-of-the-art Advanced Water Quality Assurance Laboratory.

In addition to serving on the OCWD Board, in 1993 Director Bannister was appointed Director to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) representing the Municipal Water District of Orange County. In 2004, Director Bannister was elected as Chair of the MWD Board of Directors, for which he served until October 31, 2006.

“Wes was a principled leader and committed advocate for Orange County and its water interests who also worked faithfully to address the water challenges facing the entire southern California region,” said Wayne Clark, President of the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC). “We were honored to have had Wes represent MWDOC as one of our appointed representatives to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and we are going to miss our good friend.”

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Director Bannister devoted over 23 years to serving the communities of Orange County. He served on the Huntington Beach City Council from 1986 to 1990, including as Mayor in 1989. “I had the distinct honor of serving with Wes on the City Council,” stated Assemblyman Jim Silva (R-Huntington Beach). “If it weren’t for his encouragement and support, I would not be serving in the Assembly today. Wes was invaluable to me and many of my colleagues when it came to solving state water issues. He was a mentor and a true friend who genuinely cared about the people in his community and gave of his time and energy to making a difference.”

Director Bannister was also the Republican nominee for California Insurance Commissioner in 1990 and was nominated to the Electoral College by President Bush in that same year. He also served on the West Orange County Board from 1986 to 1990 and on the Orange County Sanitation District Board of Directors, District 11, from 1988 to 1990.

In 1986, Director Bannister was appointed by the Governor to the California FAIR Plan Board of Governors and continued to serve on this Board until his untimely death. Since 1993, Director Bannister had represented OCWD on the Board of Directors of the Association of California Water Agencies Joint Powers Insurance Authority (ACWA-JPIA). While serving, the Board elected him to the Governing Committee and to serve two years as its Vice President. Following his two-year term, the Board elected him President in 2005 for a three-year term.

Active in local affairs, Director Bannister served on the boards of the Boys and Girls Club and YMCA, as Charter President of the Huntington Beach Sunrise Rotary Club and as an advisor to the Huntington Beach Search and Rescue Post 536.

Director Bannister was born in Houston, Texas in 1936. He and his wife Elizabeth (Betty) Ann Rogers Bannister were married at Fort Sill in Oklahoma in 1959 where he was stationed and recently celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Director Bannister and his wife Betty have lived in Huntington Beach since 1969. Together, the Bannisters welcomed three children, Catherine (Cathy) Ann, Alice (Lisa) Elizabeth and Douglas (Doug) Mastin.

In addition to devoting much of his time to serving the communities of Orange County, Director Bannister founded Bannister and Associates Insurance Agency in 1974, from which he retired in 2003. The family business continues to flourish under the leadership of his two surviving children Lisa and Doug. Director Bannister is also survived by two grandchildren Kaitlyn Michelle and Brent Douglas.

For more information, contact OCWD at (714) 378-3200 or go to [www.ocwd.com](http://www.ocwd.com).