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TTARA mourns the passing of John Kennedy

Our respected colleague remembered for his deep knowledge and colorful wit

The Texas Taxpayers and Research Association (TTARA) is deeply saddened to report the passing of John Kennedy, our much-loved and deeply respected TTARA colleague, over the weekend at his home in Austin. Arrangements are pending.

Kennedy, a senior analyst, joined TTARA over 52 years ago as staff to one of TTARA's predecessor organizations, the Texas Research League. He was one of the state's foremost experts on the property tax and also led TTARA's work on sales and excise taxes and state tax administration. He graduated with honors from The University of Texas at Austin in 1964 and The University of Texas School of Law in 1967.

Kennedy remained committed to his work until the end of his life, with no thought of retirement. He said that his work was exactly what he wanted to do and enjoyed doing, and he wanted to remain engaged with TTARA as long as he felt that he was contributing.

"John was the best researcher and analyst I've ever worked with," said TTARA President Dale Craymer. "He made all of us here better at what we do. He could tackle the most challenging issues, and not only could he make sense of it, he also could explain it so a third grader could understand it. John probably forgot more about tax policy than I ever learned in my career."

In addition to his deep knowledge on a variety of tax issues, Kennedy was known for his colorful way of expressing his viewpoint, which he usually held with both strength and humility.

"John was always ready to share his wit and wisdom with us, and he had a knack for finding humor in any situation," said Ryan Ash, TTARA communications director. "He was also a peacemaker who helped us resolve conflicts and work together harmoniously. He will be greatly missed by all of us who had the privilege of knowing him as a friend and colleague."

Kennedy's viewpoints on issues were insightful and passionate, with high regard for good policy and low regard for politics. Throughout his career, Kennedy's experience and counsel were invaluable in helping to stave off many bad policy proposals. He saw the property tax system at its worst in his early career and jealously guarded the Peveto reforms he helped to craft in 1979. He was honored with the prestigious Wayne Peveto Award, which recognizes those dedicated to teaching and serving Texans in the field of ad valorem taxation, in 2018.

"John was simply a joy to work with," said Sheryl Pace, TTARA senior analyst. "He was always willing to give kind, thoughtful advice when asked for his input. He was quite often the most knowledgeable person in a discussion, but he was always willing to listen to various arguments. He was a delightful teammate, and we will miss him terribly."

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