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## **John A. 'Jack' Kyser, expert on L.A. economy, dies at 76**

**Although he lacked formal training as an economist, his street-level knowledge of the local economy helped make him a confidant to the powerful.**

By Roger Vincent and Hugo Martin, Los Angeles Times

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John A. "Jack" Kyser, the dean of Los Angeles economists who spoke as an expert on Southern California to observers around the world, has died. He was 76.

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Kyser was found dead of unknown causes Monday at his Downey home, said a longtime friend, Wally Baker.

Kyser devoted his long career to focusing on the workings of the region's economy. As the former chief economist of [the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp.](#) he was in steady demand as a speaker at business events and a reliable source who was quick with an insightful quote for reporters on deadline.

"Jack was truly the authority on L.A.'s economy," said Mark Liberman, president of LA Inc., the Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau. "If he said it, you knew it was true, because his voice influenced every projection about L.A.'s economy."

Kyser moved among the business elite but often spoke comfortably of his humble upbringing in working-class Downey.

He was born April 20, 1934, in Huntington Park and raised in Vernon and Downey, where he

lived much of his life.

Kyser earned a bachelor of science degree in 1955 and an MBA in 1968 from USC, but was not formally trained as an economist. His street-level knowledge of the local economy was unsurpassed, though, and helped make him a confidant to the powerful.

"Generations of leaders in L.A. — including mayors, councilmen and governors — relied on him as an advisor and counselor, and benefitted from his wisdom," said Bill Allen, chief executive of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp.

"One of Jack's gifts was his ability to make complex realities about the functioning of the economy simple so people could understand why things like trade, foreign investment and workforce preparation are important," Allen said. "He was a great communicator."

Kyser found work after his undergraduate years as a forecaster for Union Pacific Railroad in Omaha, but was laid off four years later during an economic downturn. He found paid work anchoring a news show at a local public radio station where he had been volunteering.

Kyser returned to Southern California in about a year to work for United California Bank, then spent eight years as an economist with [the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce](#). Kyser began with the economic development corporation in 1991, when it had no economics research department.

During the lean years of the early 1990s, as Los Angeles suffered through steep cutbacks in the aerospace and defense industries, Kyser singlehandedly did research, wrote reports and delivered economic news for the economic development organization. Today, its Kyser Center for Economic Research named in his honor has about a dozen employees and consultants, Allen said.

Kyser was known for getting out in the community, attending industry luncheons, walking factory floors and strolling through shopping centers during the holiday season to count the number of bags on shoppers' arms.

He was quoted or referenced in more than 1,300 Times articles since 1985, postulating about unemployment, logistics, construction, video games, aerospace, Hollywood, pornography and even wax museums. He fielded about 1,000 media calls a year, Allen said, and his words appeared in publications from as far as Russia and the Philippines.

Kyser retired from the economic development organization in June, but returned to the public eye almost immediately as an economic spokesman for [the Southern California Assn. of Governments](#).

Kyser's opinions were sought because "he had credibility," said Carol Schatz, president of the Central City Assn., a Los Angeles business advocacy group. "He remained independent

through the political pressure that plays a role with economic forecasting."

The president of the Los Angeles Sports and Entertainment Commission, Kathryn Schloessman, said Kyser "was the person our industry went to when asked about economic impact of anything happening in this city. He was a Los Angeles treasure."

Kyser had been suffering from health problems over the last two years, said Baker, an economic development consultant. Baker called firefighters to Kyser's home Monday after Kyser missed a lunch appointment

"He was one of the nicest, sweetest guys and easy to understand," Baker said. "A high school dropout could understand Jack."

Kyser had no immediate survivors. Services are pending.

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