



November 2, 2009



All Members
California State Senate
State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814



RE: Funding the Williamson Act Subventions

Dear Senator:



On behalf of California's farmers and ranchers, we must vigorously oppose the governor's May Revision proposal to permanently eliminate the funding for the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act. The Williamson Act has offered an innovative approach to agricultural and open space land protection for nearly 43 years. The success of the program is verified by the fact that nearly one-third of all the privately owned land in the state is enrolled in a Williamson Act contract. Those 16 million acres also constitute more than one-half of the state's cropland. Without the Act, California would have suffered significantly more leapfrog development, lost much of our scenic open space and wildlife habitat as well as some of the richest soil in the world.

California Wool Growers Association



California and its local governments should be very proud of their ongoing commitment to protecting our agricultural and open-space resources. This commitment has provided important land use protections that have allowed farmers and ranchers to continue to produce food, flora and fiber. The open-space subvention program is an essential part of the state's contribution to farmland protection. The subventions help replace the foregone property tax revenue due to county participation in the Williamson Act.



Pacific Coast
Quarter Horse Racing Association

Rural counties cannot afford to continue to offer the Williamson Act without the subventions to backfill for the foregone property tax revenue and the program is crucial to the viability of many farms and ranches. The subventions can be a significant contributor to rural county coffers yet it is only .036 of one percent of the state's budget. Also, if the counties decide to withdraw from the program, more land will be subdivided for homesites, many in critical watershed areas, thus driving up the cost of fire protection in the State Responsibility Areas.



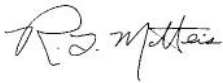
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of California

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Finally, due to the constitutional requirement that the state reimburse cities and counties for revenues lost due to the homeowners' exemption (\$70 per home), if just one percent of the Williamson Act's 16M acres of protected land converts to residential subdivisions at five units to the acre, the state would be required to pay an additional \$56M in the Homeowner's Property Tax Relief subvention. So by eliminating the \$34.7M in Williamson Act subventions, the state could actually lose hundreds of millions of dollars and that doesn't even consider the potential significant negative impact on the \$36B in farm gate value and its contribution to the gross state product.

We therefore respectfully request that you oppose the elimination of the funding the critical farmland protection program.

Sincerely,



Rich Matteis
Administrator
California Farm Bureau Federation



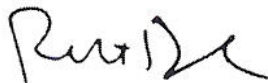
Dawn Clover
Director of Governmental Relations
California Cattlemen's Association



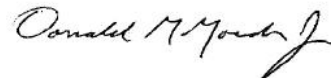
Bill Van Dam
Executive Director
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President
California Cotton Growers Association



Robert Dolezal
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California Association of Nurseries
and Garden Centers



Don Gordon
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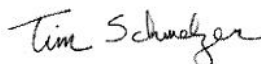
/S/

Judith Redmond
President
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Karen Ross
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Joel Nelson
President
California Citrus Mutual



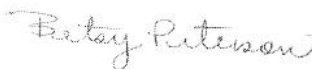
Chris Zanobini
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Pacific Coast Quarter Horse Racing
Association



Ian Anderson
President
California Association of Wheat Growers



Betsy Peterson
Associate Director
California Seed Association

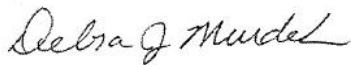
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/S/

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/S/

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Executive Director
Resource Landowners Coalition

/S/

Diana Westmoreland Pedrozo
President
California Women for Agriculture

cc: Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger