

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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April 27, 2010

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Williamson Act Subvention Funding

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors strongly urges you to restore the \$38 million in Williamson Act subvention funding in your May revision of the State budget that was previously eliminated from your proposed budget in January.

The financial support provided by the Williamson Act subventions has provided a tangible incentive for local governments to stay in the program and initiate more contracts by partially replacing property tax revenues lost on enrolled land. Like the state, counties are also being faced with making tough decisions due to declining revenues and significant budget shortfalls. The loss of already limited discretionary dollars may be the last straw for some counties struggling to provide essential public services. If the subventions are not funded, there is no doubt that some counties will be forced to discontinue their participation in the Act given local budgetary conditions.

For California, eliminating the subvention payments is the first step toward a total unraveling of the broadest based agricultural conservation program in the State. California is losing its working landscapes at an alarming rate while simultaneously faced with tremendous population pressure that further jeopardizes the economic viability of thousands of farming and ranching enterprises.

Additionally, with the passage of AB 32 and SB 375, California has committed to reducing its carbon emissions and addressing global warming in a comprehensive manner. The Williamson Act is the ultimate compliment to these measures. The Act strives to protect farmland and open space, land which in itself reduces greenhouse gas emissions through the carbon sequestration

process and has proven to be an effective tool for encouraging the preservation of existing farmland and preventing leapfrog development.

The preservation of agriculture is not just a local priority; it is – and must remain – a State priority. We urge you to support the continuance of the Williamson Act subventions.

Sincerely,

Norma Santiago, Chair
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

cc: Senator Dave Cox, 1st Senate District
Assemblyman Ted Gaines, 4th Assembly District
Assemblymember Alyson Huber, 10th Assembly District
Senator Denise Ducheny, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee Chair
Assembly Member Bob Blumenfield, Assembly Budget Committee, Chair