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RECEIVED
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
EL DORADO COUNTY

To : El Dorado County Supervisors, Districts 1,11, 111, IV, V
Re: Revision of Winery Ordinance

We have called El Dorado County's south county region home for over twenty years. We moved here because of the natural beauty of the area, the rural atmosphere, and the abundance of wildlife. For those reasons, we agree with the effort to protect our agricultural lands from encroachment, and also agree with the concept of a farmer's right-to-farm. It doesn't matter to us whether the farm consists of animals, grapes, orchards or row crops. We personally know several vintners and a few winery owners who are low-key, true-to-their-trade artisans. Most are family-oriented, small-scale operators who feel a deep connection to the ground they work. They are friendly, cooperative, neighborly people who work hard at what they do just like the rest of us. Our concern is this. The right-to-farm and winery ordinances are actually encouraging the exploitation of the very land they are supposed to be protecting. Loopholes in the winery ordinance allows proprietors, whose idea of a winery operation is anything that will boost their bottom line, the means to do so. Such people exist at present and the numbers are sure to increase as the wine industry develops and grows, unless legislation passes to prevent it.

Paul Bush, of Madrona Winery, stated in the Mountain Democrat that vintners would like an open-ended ordinance because "the wine industry is changing, and members want to avoid an unnecessary amount of precluding of future innovations." Our family is ever changing and growing as well and our land would accommodate our future needs much better if zoning allowed us two - six acre parcels instead of one - twelve acre parcel. Would you please change our zoning? One little change wouldn't create problems or negatively impact our area. But common sense tells us if we received preferential treatment to accommodate our personal needs, surely others would want the same. Negative impact would eventually result and county planners would be scratching their heads trying to figure out what to do. We believe that an open-ended winery ordinance will do the same thing and eventually create an Apple Hill style debacle in the south county area. Mr. Bush said it himself - most vintners view their product and their agricultural land as part of a much bigger, more lucrative business. An open ended winery ordinance, coupled with such a vague interpretation of the future, suggests trouble down the road. Allowing the wine industry carte blanche, to commercialize as they see fit, defeats the whole purpose of the legislation that is suppose to be protecting our valuable natural resources and rural landscape. If wine makers want to commercialize, they should buy or rent commercially zoned property and conduct that aspect of their business there.

Vintner Randy Rossi recently stated in a Sacramento Bee article, "*Many of us years ago bought property specifically to eventually have a winery. The process has taken years and hundreds of thousands of dollars.*" Mr. Rossi's statement suggests he bought property that was not zoned for a winery, but he assumed when the time came, he would be able to work around zoning laws. His statement also indicates that *many who bought property years ago to eventually have a winery* were thinking down the same lines. We, on the other hand, bought property many years ago, in an area zoned rural residential and agricultural. We also spent hundreds of thousands of dollars but it was to build our peaceful haven, all the while abiding by land-use zoning laws. We expected those zoning laws to protect our home and quality of life indefinitely. Instead, laws that are suppose to protect our quality of life are being manipulated and

changed, in order to accommodate the aspirations, interests, and lifestyles of a select few.

Last year Dr. Alvarez, owner of Mira Flores Winery, stated before the Agricultural Commission that his winery is his legacy for his daughter and no one is going to stop him from doing what he wants. Zoning in our area is the same as it was twenty years ago, except for on the Alvarez property. When you change zoning to accommodate a select few, you are taking away the protection the zoning afforded everyone else. Seems Victor Alvarez knows more about how to protect his perceived rights and his legacy than we do ours. Comments like those of Mr. Bush, Mr. Rossi, and Dr. Alvarez are indicative of the disregard some vintners have for rural residential landowners. What about our lifestyle, quality of living, and the legacy we hoped to leave our children? What about the hundreds of thousands of dollars we spent building our dream home? Does none of this matter?

There is no central winery/ commercial agricultural area - no winery row if you will. Wineries are interspersed throughout the western slope, with much of the new development of wineries being in the South County area - generally right next door to *existing* rural residences. *Winery developments are encroaching on us, not we on them!* It is not candle or widget makers, or local commercial businesses feeling the affects of the expansion of the winery industry - it is rural residents! Some winery owners have such disdain for their neighbors that they will bend over backwards to throw their weight around. Your watered-down laws embolden and strengthen their resolve all the while stripping us of our rights and leaving us with absolutely no protection against encroachment and negative impact. This needs to change! There has to be a happy medium. A farm is where you grow crops and possibly sell your crops. It isn't a place where you have weddings, retreats, concerts, sell goods and wares not at all related to your crops. The right-to-farm and winery ordinances that are suppose to protect a farmer's rights have gone too far.

Additionally, the infrastructure to support droves of party and special events attendees is not in the south county area and doesn't have a chance of ever developing because of very complex water, septic and road issues. There are miles and miles of narrow, winding, sub-standard roads, many of them private and already an issue for local residents. Hotels, public restrooms, and banking facilities are non-existent. Eating establishments are in short supply. If the wine industry is allowed to develop virtually unchecked, as vintners and the Agricultural Commission would like, it is going to make driving to Apple Hill on a Sunday seem like a picnic.

The wine industry is formidable, its power and voice unmatched by their opposition. *However, the number of people attending meetings, the degree of organization, how loud their voice or how much power and wealth they can amass should not be what determines the outcome of this issue! The bottom line is - what is best for El Dorado County residents and the environment in which we live. Your decision should be based on the greater good and should not be influenced by power, money, personal interests, or personal preference.*

We urge our County's Supervisors to consider the consequences of allowing the wine industry to write their own ticket for the future. There is definitely a place for wineries and tourism in El Dorado County but it must be part of a well-defined plan.

Respectfully,

Jack and Kathy Zimmer



Kathy <farmkat@inbox.com>
03/19/2007 11:18 AM

To ckeck@co.el-dorado.ca.us
cc
bcc
Subject Winery Ordinance

Ms. Keck - attached herewith is a letter we drafted regarding the winery ordinance. It is our understanding that the BOS will soon be considering changes to the ordinance. We would like our comments to be part of the record if possible. Thank you.



Jack and kathy Zimmer Winery Ordinance to BOS.doc