

County of El Dorado

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June 19, 2007

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On behalf of the County of El Dorado, I am writing to express our concern over the governor's budget proposal to eliminate \$39.1 million in Williamson Act subventions. It is the collective opinion of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors that this program has a very strong track record of preserving California's precious farmland and open space that is constantly under development pressures.

For local governments, the financial support provided by the Williamson Act subventions has allowed us to provide the means necessary to protect vulnerable agricultural lands on very limited budgets. We are of the opinion that the preservation of these lands is a priority of both the state and local governments. Also, any reduction in subvention amounts will result in further reductions in other priority programs. If the subventions are not funded, there is little doubt that counties will be forced to discontinue their participation in the act given local budgetary constraints and limited resources.

Additionally, property tax revenue growth has dropped considerably in many parts of the state and will continue to decline as the housing market slows. Many counties, including El Dorado, are adjusting their revenue growth downward due to the declining real estate market. The proposed Williamson Act subvention elimination will further exacerbate this situation.

If the proposed elimination of the subvention takes place, we believe that it is the first step toward a total unraveling of the broadest based, most successful agricultural conservation program in the state. California is losing its working landscapes at an alarming rate while simultaneously facing tremendous population pressure that further jeopardizes the economic viability of thousands of farming and ranching enterprises. Even with the Williamson Act, the Department of Conservation estimates nearly 400,000 acres of farmland were converted to other uses from 2000 to 2002.

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,

Helen K. Baumann, Chair
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

cc: Budget Conference Committee Members

Assembly Member John Laird (Chair) assemblymember.laird@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member Mark Leno assemblymember.leno@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member Roger Niello assemblymember.niello@assembly.ca.gov
Senator Mike Machado senator.machado@sen.ca.gov
Senator Denise Moreno Ducheny senator.ducheny@sen.ca.gov
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Governor Schwarzenegger
RE: Williamson Act Subventions
June 19, 2007

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Assemblyman Alan - Nakanishi State Capitol, Room 5175
Assemblyman Ted Gaines - State Capitol Office, Room 2002
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Regional Council of Rural Counties