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Santa Ynez Valley Concerned Citizens

OVERNIGHT EXPRESS DELIVERY
FAXED 3/25 to Committee Members

Board of Directors

March 24, 2009

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The Honorable Patricia Wiggins, Chair
Senate Local Government Committee
State Capitol, Room 4081
Sacramento, CA 95814
916-651-4115/fax916-322-0298

RECEIVED

APR 02 2009

THIRD DISTRICT OFFICE

Re: **SB 170 - Williamson Act Contracts**
Hearing: April 1, 2009
OPPOSED

Dear Senator Wiggins:

Santa Ynez Valley Concerned Citizens, a large and diverse group of voters from Santa Barbara County, are strongly opposed to SB 170 (Florez). Specifically, SB 170 proposes allowance of cancellation of Williamson Act contracts by tribal interests. Unfortunately, it goes much further, all to the detriment of county taxpayers.

This proposed legislation represents nothing more than an obvious and egregious state-wide land-grab attempt to the benefit of tribes and the gaming industry. SB 170 sets in place a mechanism to destroy the Williamson Act conservation program.

For example, because California cities and counties are empowered to remove land from the Williamson Act for public interest, tribes are now arguing that, as sovereign nations, they should have that same right to obtain and develop Williamson Act lands by cancellation of the contracts. Worse, SB 170 puts the burden on our financially-challenged counties to prove a use is not in the public interest.

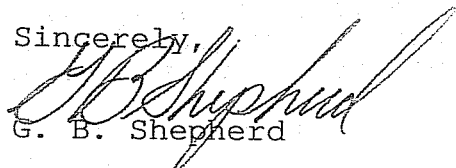
Note: cities who use Williamson Act land for housing must wait-out the 10-year removal period. Further, land removed by cities brings the property tax current as public revenue. Land removed by tribes eliminates the revenue derived from the property tax.

The Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC) and the California State Association of Counties (SCAC) are opposed to SB 170.

A similar bill was apparently introduced and died in assembly committee about two years ago.

We urge, and respectfully request, that your committee oppose this proposed bill and vote against SB 170 on April 1, 2009.

Sincerely,



G. B. Shepherd