

#6

April 2nd 2009  
Honorable Joe Centeno, Chair  
Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors

**RE: SB 170--OPPOSE**



Dear Joe:

POLO has reviewed SB 170 and the new amendments that would allow an indian tribe to cancel Williamson Act Contracts immediately after purchasing agriculturally zoned lands. In our review of this bill we can find no benefit to the county or the state by supporting this bill. On the contrary we can only see expenses to the taxpayers and the county government by allowing an entity to cancel the Williamson Act Contract only to remove an incumbrance that would allow a tribe to annex land through the fee to trust process. We find that SB 170 would weaken the constitutionality of the Williamson Act and could potentially damage the Act to the extent that not only Santa Barbara County Farmers and Ranchers could be put out of business, but agricultural businesses and families all over the State could loose their WA Contracts that they depend on to stay in business. Many farmers estimate that if the Act were weakened and lost it would triple the taxes on farm and ranch land which would put the majority of farmers and ranchers out of business and forces thousands of fire sales of property.

There are well over 100 tribal governments that could take advantage of SB 170 depending on Carciere vs Dept. of Interior and most likely would partner up with investors that see FTT as a way to build whatever they want with no local or state oversight. The disruption of millions of acres of ag land would be a chain reaction caused by this this bill. Locally there are well over 1700 acres that are contiguous to the local reservation. There are thousands of more acres that are contiguous to those. The chain reaction would create a chaotic situation for agricultural property owners throughout the state.

The goal stated many times in print and public by the local tribal leader that the casino wants to expand its operations to rise to the level of the largest casino's in the United States such as the Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods tells us that the cancellation of the Williamson Act is solely for the expansion of a land base that will not be taxed, or regulated by local or state government. The goals of the previous attempt to partner with the 1400 acres Fess Parker property to build 500 homes, golf course, casino, etc is one of the reasons that last years attempt to pass a similar bill died in committee.

The creation of a thousand acre plus casino city within the center of the Santa Ynez Valley is the reason SB 170 has been proposed and is a severe threat to agriculture all over the state. The tribal leader are not interested in protecting AG and this bill was not contrived for any other reason than to expand gambling and gambling infrastructure. This is not conjecture, but fact based on court documents that have previously been presented to the Board of Supervisors at other related hearings.

The additional cost of police, fire and roads for an untaxed, unregulated city could bankrupt this county and for what reason. The lack of environmental oversight and controls could adversely affect the health and safety of neighboring towns, homes, and individuals.

"The Williamson Act has successfully protected Californias farm and ranch land for nearly half a century. It has also saved rural counties hundreds of millions dollars in community service costs by preventing discontinuous patterns of urban development. Please dont destroy our best land conservation program by facilitating immediate cancellations for projects that would not even have to be consistent with county general plans". Farm Bureau

We respectfully urge your NO vote on SB 170 when it is heard by the BOS on April 7th 2009

Sincerely,

Doug Herthel

President POLO