



January 21, 2011

The Honorable Mark Leno
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5100
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Blumenfield
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Williamson Act Funding

Dear Senator Leno and Assembly Member Blumenfield:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and the Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC), we write to express our strong opposition to the Governor's 2011-12 State Budget proposal to virtually eliminate all of the Williamson Act subvention payments to local governments.

Enacted in 1971, the Williamson Act is the single most effective agricultural land preservation program in California. The program protects 16.5 million acres of farmland throughout the state by offering property tax relief in return for rolling contracts to keep land in commercial agricultural production for 10 or 20 years. The Act's subvention program sets forth a state reimbursement formula that 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.

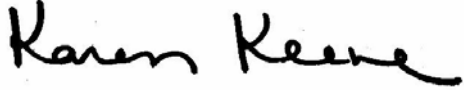
The ramifications of eliminating the subventions are far reaching. The subvention dollars represent one of the last sources of discretionary revenues for the counties and their loss equates to further erosion of county services including: public safety, land use, elections, road maintenance and various social safety net programs. Additionally, these revenues will be essential to help support any new program responsibilities shifted to counties should any of the Governor's state/local government realignment proposals move forward.

In addition to preserving our state's agriculture, land under Williamson Act contract help contribute to meeting California's AB 32 and SB 375 goals through carbon sequestration and effective land-use planning. Counties rely on the program to implement general plan conservation programs which address the growth of urban areas, the expansion of public infrastructure and the conservation of important agriculture and open space resources. The program also helps to maintain open space and critical habitat for many of California's most sensitive species.

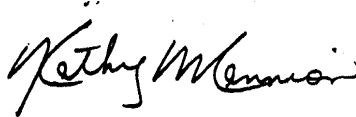
Given the Williamson Act's statewide benefits to the economy, agriculture and the environment, it is our hope that you as state leaders will demonstrate your commitment to the program by reinvesting in its long-term success.

Please contact Kathy Mannion at (916) 447-4806 or Karen Keene at (916) 327-7500x511 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Karen Keene
CSAC Legislative Representative



Kathy Mannion
RCRC Legislative Advocate

cc: Governor Jerry Brown
President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg
Senate Minority Leader Bob Dutton
Speaker John Perez
Assembly Minority Leader Connie Conway
Members and Consultants of the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Members and Consultants of the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4
Members and Consultants of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members and Consultants of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4