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March 11, 2009

The Honorable Patricia Wiggins, Chair
Senate Local Government Committee
State Capitol, Room 4081
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 170 (Florez) – Williamson Act Contracts: Cancellation
OPPOSE
Set for Hearing April 1, 2009**

Dear Senator Wiggins:

The Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC) and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) are opposed SB 170 (Florez), concerning the cancellation of Williamson Act contracts by tribal interests.

SB 170 would provide Native American tribes or tribal groups with the authority to seek immediate cancellation of a Williamson Act contract by qualifying the proposed siting of a myriad of new uses on Williamson Act land as in the public interest. In order to disallow the immediate cancellation, the bill would require the affected Board of Supervisors to rebut the presumption that the cancellation is in the public interest.

Both RCRC and CSAC have longstanding policy to support the integrity of the Williamson Act. These proposed amendments are in conflict with this policy direction and make a mockery of the state's most successful voluntary farmland conservation program.

RCRC and CSAC are concerned that SB 170 would increase the likelihood of litigation filed by tribal interests against counties who choose to rebut the presumption. Our small, financially strapped counties will likely not even have the option to rebut because they lack the resources to enter into a costly lawsuit with tribal interests.

It is for these reasons that our organizations must oppose SB 170 and respectfully request your 'No' vote when it is heard before your committee. If you should have any questions regarding our position, please contact either of us at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Karen Keene, CSAC
Senior Legislative Representative
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Legislative Advocate
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cc: Members, Senate Local Government Committee
Committee Consultant
Minority Committee Consultant