

Stand Up For California!

“Citizens making a difference”

www.standupca.org

P.O. Box 355
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April 8, 2009

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

**RE: OPPOSE - SB 170 (Florez) – Williamson Act Contracts: Cancellation
Set for Hearing April 15, 2009**

Dear Senator Wiggins:

Stand Up For California is opposed to SB 170 (Florez), concerning the cancellation of Williamson Act contracts by tribal interests. California is home to 108 tribal governments with the smallest population of Native Americans some 32,000, scattered throughout our state. Over the last several years, tribal governments have applied through the federal regulatory process and Acts of Congress to acquire thousands upon thousands of acres of land into trust. Trust status removes land off of the tax rolls and shields tribal developments from important environmental laws that protect the shared natural resources of non-tribal governments and the state.

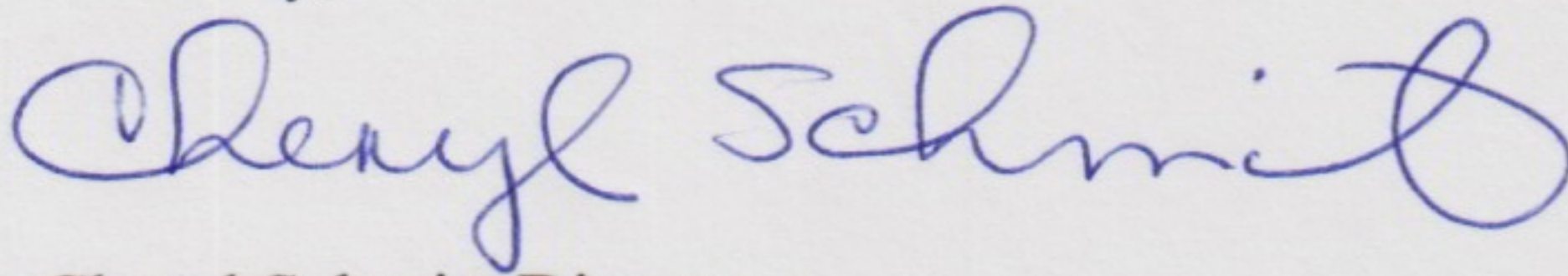
State Legislators must give great consideration to the delicate balance of authority between tribes, local government and the state in the enactment of any new or amendment to a law that seeks to expand or make an exception for tribal authority. A Tribes participation in the exercise of a public power such as the condemnation of a Williamson Act contract that is located on off-reservation lands significantly diminishes public accountability and control.

Federally recognized tribes can work cooperatively with nearby local governments through agreements and memorandums of understanding. Indeed, Santa Ynez Chumash was invited to work cooperatively with the County of Santa Barbara and Concerned Citizens of Santa Ynez. A suggested memorandum of understanding was offered to establish a mutually beneficial relationship. The Tribe in 2005/2006 refused to come to the table to discuss any such similar agreement. That refusal set the Tribe on a course the led to difficult, protracted and adversarial litigation.

The federal level of government offers a regulatory process for the acquisition of fee to trust lands. The issue of Williamson Act can be and should be resolved in that process providing the opportunity for all affected stakeholders to address their concerns and needs.

Stand Up For California is opposed to SB 170 as it fails to maintain the delicate balance of authorities between tribes, local government, California and the federal level of government.

Sincerely,



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CC: Honorable Members of the Local Government Committee