

For Immediate Release:

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Chumash bill trampling Santa Ynez private property rights and local control again defeated

(SANTA YNEZ, CALIF) The 115th Congress adjourned without taking action on H.R. 1491, essentially killing a special-interest bill that would have added 1,400 pristine acres to the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians reservation and allowed the tribe to build a development that massively violates local zoning and planning restrictions. This is the second consecutive Congress legislators chose not to enact the Chumash bill.

The bill, which had passed the House, stalled in the Senate after the Santa Ynez Valley Coalition mounted strong opposition locally and in Washington DC, where Coalition President Bill Krauch testified against the bill before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

"The fact that Congress declined to pass H.R. 1491 after hearing all the arguments against it is a victory for local land use control, as well as the rights of affected parties," said Bill Krauch, Chair of the Santa Ynez Valley Coalition.

"As we have repeatedly stated, the Santa Ynez Valley Coalition stands ready to work with the Chumash to address their housing needs while protecting the property values and the economic viability of the surrounding area and ensuring that local taxpayers are not on the hook to support Tribal development."

For Camp 4, the Chumash have proposed development plans that were opposed by residents and Santa Barbara County officials. The most recent iteration called for 143 homes – more than ten times allowed under current zoning - and a 12,000 square foot tribal center with 200 parking spaces and a proposed schedule of 100 events a year.

When residents and the County filed lawsuits to overturn the Bureau of Indian Affairs approval of the project, the Tribe asked a Congressman from more than 400 miles outside the Valley to introduce HR 1491.

The bill would have violated the Community Plan adopted in 2009 after 10 years of community involvement and thrown out the legal challenges. Eventually, the Tribe will have unfettered ability to build large commercial, high-density housing and even industrial developments on the agriculturally zoned Camp 4 property. And, the Tribe could petition Congress for another Casino.

Facing great odds, the Coalition mobilized the community to stop the bill. Members flew back to Washington to meet key Congressional members, forcing a public hearing before the Senate's Indian Affairs Committee. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Committee Chairman suggested the Coalition and the Tribe meet to resolve their differences.

Tribal officials refused to negotiate, creating an impasse that led to the bill's demise.

Despite that, Coalition Chairman Krauch maintains that he and Coalition members are willing to sit down any time with the Tribe to come up with a mutually agreeable solution.

"We are neighbors, and we want to discuss this in a neighborly way, and not through the back door of Washington D.C.," Krauch added.

The mission of the Santa Ynez Valley Coalition is ensuring that the Santa Ynez Valley residents have a voice in land use decisions affecting our water, environment, public safety, and economy and opposes "Fee to Trust" efforts by the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians.