

April 21, 2009

TO: Members of California's Congressional Delegation

FR: California's Agriculture and Conservation Community

RE: Please Co-Sponsor H.R. 1831, The Conservation Easement Incentive Act

On behalf of the undersigned agriculture and conservation organizations, we urge you to become a co-sponsor of H.R. 1831, the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, recently introduced by Congressmen Mike Thompson (D-CA) and Eric Cantor (R-VA).

First passed in 2006, and reauthorized by the 2008 Farm Bill, the enhanced tax incentive for conservation easement donations encourages voluntary, incentive-based donations of future development rights. These conservation easements keep farm, ranch and forest lands in productive use, protect important fish and wildlife habitat, and conserve our scenic and historic heritage. H.R. 1831 will keep this critical conservation tool from expiring at the end of 2009.

Under previous law, landowners with modest incomes received little or no tax benefit from the donation of development rights - often the family's most valuable asset. By allowing easement donors to deduct a larger portion of their income over a longer period of time, this incentive has helped thousands of farm and ranch families afford to choose conservation over development.

Identical legislation in the 110th Congress (H.R.1576 / S.469) had 183 House and 28 Senate co-sponsors. Both the Bush Administration's FY2009 budget and the Obama Administration's campaign website endorsed extending this important conservation incentive. The 2008 Farm Bill reauthorized the incentive until December 31, 2009, but landowners considering a perpetual commitment for their land should not be pressured by an artificial deadline, and many will never begin the process without the reassurance of a permanent incentive.

We encourage you to co-sponsor the Conservation Easement Incentive Act by contacting Travis Robey in Congressman Mike Thompson's Office (5-3311) or Wyatt Stewart in Congressman Eric Cantor's Office (5-2815).

Thank you for your continued commitment to safeguarding farm and ranch land, supporting rural economies and conserving our natural resources.

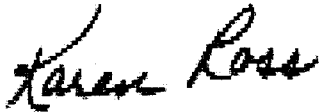
Sincerely,



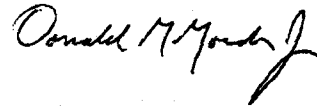
Doug Mosebar
President
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Nita Vail
Executive Director
California Rangeland Trust




Karen Ross
President
California Association of Winegrape Growers



Don Gordon
President
Ag Council of California



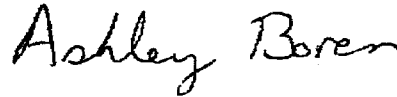
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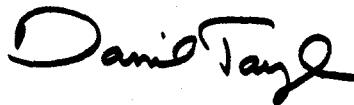
Lesa Carlton
Executive Director
California Wool Growers Association



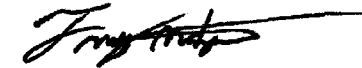
Tom Talbot
President
California Cattlemen's Association



Bill Gaines
President
California Outdoor Heritage Alliance



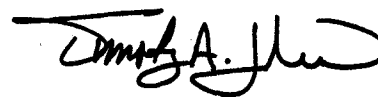
Dan Taylor
Director of Public Policy
Audubon California



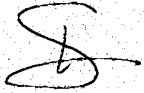
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