

Enrolled

Senate Concurrent Resolution 9

Sponsored by Senators JOHNSON, BOQUIST, Representative WEIDNER

Whereas David Lett was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1939 and died on October 9, 2008, at his home in Dundee; and

Whereas David Lett had moved to Oregon more than 40 years before with a vision of Oregon as a preeminent wine-producing region; and

Whereas in 1964, after graduating from the Department of Viticulture and Enology at the University of California, Davis, and interviewing grape growers and vintners during a tour of several European winegrowing regions, David Lett concluded that pinot noir and other cool-climate wine varieties could possibly reach their highest potential of flavor and value not in California, but in the cooler, more difficult climate of Oregon's Willamette Valley; and

Whereas David Lett gathered 3,000 vine cuttings from research vineyards in northern California, including pinot noir, pinot meunier, Riesling and gewurztraminer, chardonnay cuttings from the Draper family's heirloom French vines, and 160 pinot gris cuttings from the four existing "mother vines" at the University of California ampelography collection; and

Whereas in January 1965, at the age of 25 years, disregarding advice from his professors, David Lett loaded the cuttings into his uncle's horse trailer and moved north to the Willamette Valley to look for his ideal vineyard site; and

Whereas David Lett rented a 100-by 200-foot plot from a Benton County ryegrass farmer to serve as a nursery for the cuttings to root while he continued to search for vineyard land and christened the young vines with a bottle of pinot noir from Burgundy; and

Whereas early in 1965, David Lett helped his classmate, Charles Coury, establish plantings near Forest Grove, setting a precedent of collaboration that has helped define Oregon winegrowing; and

Whereas in his search for a vineyard site, David Lett considered the Red Hills of Dundee a prime viticultural area and purchased a 20-acre former prune orchard at the south end of the Dundee Hills; and

Whereas David Lett and his new bride, Diana, dug up the rooted vines in the nursery plot, transported them to Dundee and heeled them in until planting time, spending their honeymoon year planting and tending the first five acres; and

Whereas David and Diana Lett named their endeavor the Eyrie Vineyards, in honor of the red-tailed hawks who nested in the tall fir tree at the top of the property; and

Whereas in 1970, the Eyrie Vineyards produced its first vintage, the Willamette Valley's first pinot noir and other varieties, including America's first pinot gris; and

Whereas in the 1970s, David Lett began his lifelong advocacy for farmland protection by lobbying for the preservation of hillside lands for viticulture; and

Whereas David Lett was active in the Oregon Viticultural Development Committee, helped found the Oregon Winegrowers Association and contributed significantly to the development of the highest standards and strictest wine labeling laws in America to ensure the quality of Oregon wines; and

Whereas in 1979, unbeknownst to David Lett, a bottle of the Eyrie Vineyards 1975 South Block pinot noir was entered into GaultMillau's "Olympiades" international wine competition in Paris, where it scored in the top 10 pinot noirs; and

Whereas in 1980, French winemaker, Robert Drouhin, director of the famed Burgundian wine firm Joseph Drouhin, challenged the top pinot noirs from the Olympiades to a rematch in Beaune, France, against vintages selected from the cellars of Drouhin; and

Whereas in the competition in Beaune, David Lett's 1975 South Block pinot noir came in second, only two-tenths of a point behind Drouhin's 1959 Chambolle-Musigny, and brought the first international recognition of Oregon as a new world home for pinot noir; and

Whereas in 1987, David Lett was one of a small group of Oregon wine pioneers, local restaurateurs and wine consumers to found the annual three-day International Pinot Noir Celebration in McMinnville, attracting a sell-out crowd every year of 550 winemakers and wine aficionados from Oregon, France, California, New Zealand and throughout the world; and

Whereas in 1987, David Lett, fellow Oregon winegrower, David Adelsheim, and Eyrie's vineyard manager, Joel Myers, were instrumental in finding land and assisting Robert Drouhin in the purchase of a vineyard site in the Dundee Hills for the establishment of Domaine Drouhin Oregon; and

Whereas in 2007, 9,850 acres were planted in pinot noir in Oregon, as well as 7,541 acres of pinot gris, chardonnay and other varietals, providing fruit for winemaking and spectacular rural beauty; and

Whereas in 2008, 375 Oregon wineries produced mostly hand-crafted, internationally-acclaimed wines, directly employing more than 5,800 people industry-wide and generating \$1.4 billion for Oregon's economy; and

Whereas in July 2008, David Lett formally retired as winemaker at the Eyrie Vineyards, and proudly passed the Eyrie torch to his son, Jason, with a tasting of pinot noir reserves from all his 39 vintages; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:

That we, the members of the Seventy-fifth Legislative Assembly, extend our condolences to David Lett's wife, Diana, their sons, Jason and James, and their granddaughters, and honor David Lett's vision, dedication and decades of effort to lay the foundation of the Oregon wine industry and his bequest to it of the values of quality, purity and finesse in wines and of individualism, collaboration and respect for site, soil and grape in winemakers.

Adopted by Senate April 7, 2009

Secretary of Senate

President of Senate

Adopted by House May 12, 2009

Speaker of House