

# Senate Concurrent Resolution 9

Sponsored by Senators JOHNSON, BOQUIST, Representative WEIDNER

## SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

In memoriam: David Lett, 1939-2008.

## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1  
2       Whereas David Lett was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1939 and died on October 9, 2008, at his  
3 home in Dundee; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**NOTE:** Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted.  
New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1       Whereas in the 1970s, David Lett began his lifelong advocacy for farmland protection by lobby-  
2 ing for the preservation of hillside lands for viticulture; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

29       Whereas in July 2008, David Lett formally retired as winemaker at the Eyrie Vineyards, and  
30 proudly passed the Eyrie torch to his son, Jason, with a tasting of pinot noir reserves from all his  
31 39 vintages; now, therefore,

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

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

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