

Robert T. Elliott
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To: Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
Re: SB841

April 11, 2013.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I live in a rural community north of Highway 26.

I'm greatly concerned about the unintended consequences of SB841.

Three event centers operated under the guise of being a winery/vineyard in our rural neighborhood. These property owners planted small wine vineyards and took advantage of the law to hold weddings, corporate retreats, concerts, movie nights, and card nights, claiming these events were purely for the purpose of marketing their wine. These event centers are bringing in a large number of people to the rural area, negatively impacting the livability and safety of our neighborhood. They are not creating new economic growth, but simply shifting the entertainment business from the urban event centers to farm and forest lands.

During the period of September 1, 2012 and September 30, 2012 there were 3,954 vehicle trips generated by one event center located at the end of my rural country road. One event was a rock concert held September 14, 2012 and created 590 vehicle trips alone. When you consider these vehicle trips take place over a few hours, the traffic is extremely heavy for a two-lane country road. The fact that alcohol is served intensifies an already dangerous situation. You can't imagine the noise generated by these events. Some of the wedding events sound like wild drunken parties. There is constant screaming and yelling with amplified toasts and music. This noise carries long distances and makes it almost impossible for our neighborhood to enjoy a pleasant evening with our families outdoors.

In addition to the heavy traffic and noise, our community lives in constant fear of

wildfires. The large number of urban visitors attending these events significantly increases this danger. With attendees smoking and vehicles parking on unpaved areas, there is a real concern that a wildfire will start. The steep terrain and limited access to the forested areas makes firefighting extremely difficult. This is not the intended use of our farm lands and forests. I believe SB841 needs to add provisions to prevent these event centers from operating under the guise of being wineries. I, also, recommend that you address the issue of enforcement of any legislation that is passed. Otherwise, it becomes a complicated, burdensome and expensive problem that neighbors have to undertake to ensure that there is compliance to the law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert T. Elliott".

Robert T. Elliott