



February 3, 2016

Senator Lee Beyer  
Senator Fred Girod  
Senator Rod Monroe  
Senator Chuck Riley  
Senator Chuck Thomsen

Dear Senators,

The Oregon Winegrowers Association (OWA) is proposing two important changes to the Oregon Wine Country license plate statute to ensure wine and culinary tourism programs statewide are coordinated and leveraged to have the greatest impact on Oregon wine tourism promotion. Winery associations around the state are in favor of SB 1543-1 and write to urge your support.

Local and regional wine associations are membership organizations responsible for marketing and promoting our specific wine regions. Local and regional wine associations and the Oregon Wine Board work on many promotion and marketing initiatives and attracting tourism is a critical part of our work. We are keen to have greater collaboration with local tourism groups to achieve this shared goal and avoid redundancy and missed opportunities. For example, Wine Country License Plate funds could be used to leverage numerous wine industry events that attract thousands of visitors to Oregon each year and plans could recognize existing media and public relations expertise and contacts developed by the Oregon Wine Board and Travel Oregon.

Wine-related tourism in Oregon now generates over \$200 million in annual statewide economic impact and is fueling a fast-growing sector of the Oregon wine category. Research confirms wine tourism pays dividends to our state long after visitors return home and make ongoing Oregon wine purchases. A recent report indicates that direct-to-consumer shipments of Oregon wines in 2015 grew to \$100 million and are trending at twice the wine category's overall annual growth rate. Direct-to-consumer sales are the lifeblood of the Oregon wine industry and increasing wine tourism is critical to our future success. To support this, we would like 100% of the funding from the Oregon Wine Country license plate program dedicated to wine and culinary tourism and consultation with winery associations when developing spending plans.

We trust this modified program will ensure these limited dollars are best utilized to promote effective and collaborative wine and culinary tourism initiatives.

We urge you to support SB 1543-1.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eugenia Keegan".

Eugenia Keegan, President  
Board of Directors  
Willamette Valley Wineries Association