



1415 L Street
Suite 1000
Sacramento
CA, 95814
916-446-4656

August 24, 2026

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
1021 O Street, Suite 1000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1156 (Wicks) – Continued Opposition Despite Proposed Amendments

Dear Assemblymember Wicks,

On behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, I write to express continued opposition to AB 1156 (Wicks). Although the author has proposed amendments intended to address stakeholder concerns, the revisions do not resolve Kern County's core objections regarding local authority, contract integrity, and long-term fiscal impacts.

The Williamson Act is built on a voluntary contractual relationship between counties and landowners. For nearly six decades, counties (not the State) have administered, monitored, and implemented these contracts even when the State ended funding for Williamson Act subventions nearly two decades ago. AB 1156 would fundamentally alter that balance. Under the proposed amendments:

- Applicants may request cancellation fee waivers directly from the Secretary of Natural Resources;
- A 10-year ministerial "extension-to-waiver" mechanism guarantees fee elimination once a solar project is constructed; and
- The Governor's Office would be authorized to nullify Williamson Act contracts for certified Environmental Leadership Development Projects (ELDP) following local permit approval.

These provisions substantially expand State authority over agreements to which the State is a not party to, and they transfer decision-making power away from counties that have historically served as stewards of agricultural lands.

The Williamson Act includes rigorously defined cancellation criteria to ensure that transitions away from agricultural use occur transparently and only when warranted. The fee waiver mechanisms added to AB 1156, particularly the ministerial extension leading to automatic waiver, undermine this framework by creating new pathways that bypass long-standing standards.

The proposed ELDP nullification process represents an even more consequential departure. Although local agencies would retain CEQA lead status, the State's authority to void contracts after local permit approval effectively sidesteps local judgment regarding whether established cancellation criteria have been met.

Kern County hosts more utility-scale solar than any county in California and expects additional projects as SGMA-driven fallowing expands. Kern recognizes the importance of renewable energy development, but not at the expense of weakening agricultural land protections or diminishing the stability of long-term local land-use agreements.

AB 1156 incentivizes conversion of contracted agricultural land without providing corresponding safeguards that ensure communities hosting these projects do not bear disproportionate impacts. The proposed amendments do not address fiscal concerns related to contract dissolution, tax equity, or the cumulative effect on county services.

Likewise, while AB 1156 differs in subject matter from recent legislation concerning solar tax valuations (SB 1329, McNerney), it reflects a similar pattern: State-driven policy changes that reshape local land-use or fiscal frameworks in ways that consistently disadvantage rural counties that host California's clean energy infrastructure. Kern County remains committed to supporting the State's renewable energy objectives, but sustainable implementation requires preserving county authority, contract integrity, and equitable fiscal treatment.

For these reasons, Kern County respectfully maintains its opposition to AB 1156, and urges the Legislature to pursue solutions that genuinely support SGMA-impacted regions and renewable energy deployment without undermining local control or the foundational structure of Williamson Act contracts. Kern stands ready to work collaboratively on policies that advance renewable energy goals while protecting the agricultural, fiscal, and governance interests of rural counties.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Yoder
Legislative Advocate

CC: Honorable Chair and Members, Assembly Local Government Committee
Honorable Chair and Members, Assembly Energy & Utilities Committee
Honorable Chair and Members, Assembly Agriculture Committee
Honorable Chair and Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Honorable Chair and Members, Senate Local Government Committee
Honorable Chair and Members, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
Honorable Chair and Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Honorable Members, Kern State Legislative Delegation