

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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August 25, 2026

The Honorable Monique Limon
Senate President Pro Tempore
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento CA, 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento CA, 95814

RE: Rural Equity and Statewide Policy Concerns Reflected in AJR 23

Dear Senator Limon and Assembly Member Rivas,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to provide perspective on Assembly Joint Resolution 23 (AJR 23). We believe this resolution reflects an increasingly urgent concern shared by many rural and inland communities who feel that large portions of California feel unheard, unseen, and disproportionately burdened by statewide policymaking.

Kern County has long been a willing partner in advancing California's economic, environmental, and energy goals. Our residents take great pride in contributing to the prosperity of the entire state. However, recent years have brought mounting frustration as major policy decisions, particularly around energy, land use, water, and taxation, have imposed significant strain on the very regions that help keep California running.

For decades, Kern County has served as the backbone of California's energy supply. Our oil and gas sector is not only central to statewide economic stability but also provides thousands of local jobs and supports vital public services. Yet the continued effort to eliminate this industry, often through accelerated regulatory restrictions rather than collaborative planning, has left our community feeling targeted rather than supported. Kern is working diligently to transition and diversify, but the pace and structure of state-level mandates threaten our ability to do so responsibly and sustainably.

Similarly, policies that grant broad tax advantages to large-scale solar developments have created an uneven playing field. These incentives reduce Kern's local tax base and limit our capacity to fund public safety, infrastructure, and essential services. While we support renewable energy and recognize its critical role in California's future, current policies do not adequately account for the fiscal impacts borne almost entirely by rural counties like ours.

Our agriculture industry, another cornerstone of Kern's identity and economy, is increasingly constrained by the implementation of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act requirements.

Water scarcity is a real and pressing challenge, and we fully recognize the need for long-term stewardship. Yet many rural communities feel the weight of compliance without receiving the commensurate support, flexibility, or infrastructure investment necessary to keep our agricultural sector viable.

In many ways, the sentiment expressed through AJR 23 mirrors a dynamic familiar at the statewide level. Just as California has, at times, felt targeted by what it views as aggressive or heavy-handed policy tactics by the federal government, many rural counties experience a similar sense of being pressured or overwhelmed by state policies that impose sweeping change without sufficient collaboration or regard for local conditions. This parallel is not meant to equate the two circumstances, but to highlight how deeply frustrating it can feel when decisions are made far from home and communities believe their voices are marginalized.

Moreover, this dynamic runs counter to the vision our nation's founders intended for our democratic system. They understood that a healthy republic depends on broad inclusion and meaningful representation. When significant portions of the population feel left out of critical policy discussions, it undermines the very principles of balance, participation, and shared governance that our founders considered essential to the nation's stability and unity.

These issues are not isolated. Collectively, they illustrate a broader trend where rural and inland counties often lack a meaningful seat at the table when statewide decisions are made. Kern County remains committed to partnership, innovation, and problem-solving. But we cannot ignore the growing sentiment that policies developed in Sacramento frequently overlook the realities facing communities outside California's coastal population centers.

For these reasons, our Board believes the frustration expressed through AJR 23 is so palpable that it deserves serious reflection within the Legislature. We respectfully urge lawmakers to consider how current approaches to energy, taxation, agriculture, and local governance are affecting inland California, and to prioritize stronger collaboration with the counties that provide the workforce, land base, and resources essential to the entire state's prosperity.

Kern County stands ready to work constructively with the Legislature to develop balanced, durable solutions that support both our local communities and California's long-term statewide goals. We appreciate your attention to these concerns and hope AJR 23 will serve as an opportunity for renewed dialogue and partnership.

Respectfully,



Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California
The Honorable Heather Hadwick, California State Assembly, District 1
The Honorable Leticia Castillo, California State Assembly, District 58
The Honorable Alexandra Macedo, California State Assembly, District 33

The Honorable Joe Patterson, California State Assembly, District 5
The Honorable Kate Sanchez, California State Assembly, District 71
The Honorable Megan Dahle, California State Senate, District 1
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Nathan Barankin, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Christine Aurre, Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of the Governor
California State Association of Counties
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