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To: The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

From: Muriel Zeller, Community Action Project Governing Committee Member

Regarding: Legislative Affairs Ad Hoc Committee Agenda Submittal for April 10, 2018

Date: April 6, 2018

Via Email

Dear Supervisors,

I am writing on behalf of the Community Action Project (CAP) and the Calaveras Planning Coalition (CPC) in regard to the proposed Legislative Affairs Ad Hoc Committee, which is on the agenda for your April 10 meeting. It is the mission of CAP to protect and improve the natural and built environments in Calaveras County by empowering people to claim their rights and participate in local government. CAP's primary program is the Calaveras Planning Coalition, which is a federation of regional and local organizations, community groups, and concerned individuals who promote public participation in land use and resource planning to ensure a healthy human, natural, and economic environment now and in the future.

The idea of establishing legislative priorities for which the county might lobby at the state or federal level is not, in and of itself, a bad idea. However, having only two supervisors establish a limited set of recommended priorities is a bad idea. An ad hoc committee of two is bound to be biased, and the committee members would only need to persuade one additional supervisor to support their recommendations. A legislative agenda drafted behind closed doors by two supervisors and then rubber stamped by a simple majority of the board has no legitimate claim to represent the legislative priorities

of the people of Calaveras County. We urge you to conduct a more open and transparent public process, especially since one of the primary methods to advance any established legislative priorities will be to hire a lobbyist with taxpayer dollars. The agenda submittal makes that apparent, "The committee would also bring recommendations back to the Board of Supervisors for any potential State and/or Federal lobbyists to assist in the legislative efforts."

The submittal says the ad hoc committee would be consulting "other local governments and special districts" but not county department heads, local non-governmental organizations, or the public. Calaveras County legislative priorities should first and foremost benefit Calaveras County. This agenda submittal sounds like the sole purpose of establishing legislative priorities would be to partner with others. Cooperation with other local governments and with special districts in lobbying for regional needs should certainly be part of the strategy to advance Calaveras legislative priorities, but cooperation should not be the sole purpose of establishing priorities.

We are also concerned that the submittal says, "One of the most pressing matters relate (sic) to water rights and water storage within the County." Since 2006, some of the CPC's greatest accomplishments have been in water planning. For example, the CPC was an active participant in the preparation of the 2013 Mokelumne-Amador-Calaveras Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan, which makes many regional water quality, water conservation and resource restoration projects eligible for state funding. The CPC was also actively involved in the 22-month collaborative process that resulted in the 2015 adoption of the inter-regional MokeWISE plan to address future conservation and development of the resources of the Mokelumne River. We have consistently advocated for Wild and Scenic designation for the upper Mokelumne. Therefore, we would be keenly interested in providing input for the establishment of any legislative priorities related to water rights and water planning. We are concerned that the "various stakeholders" with whom the committee plans to consult will only be "other local governments and special districts" as the agenda submittal seems to indicate.

The submittal refers to this as an ad hoc committee, which is temporary and dissolved upon completion of its task, "The committee would terminate by June 30, 2019, or after all work is done, whichever occurs first." But then says, "On a regular basis, it would be imperative for the County to establish an **annual** legislative platform to guide the focus on State and Federal issues (emphasis mine)." So, it appears the idea is to create a new ad hoc committee each year instead of establishing a standing committee, which seems like a rather obvious attempt to avoid the Brown Act and the transparency to which a standing committee would be subject.

Neighboring San Joaquin County establishes both state and federal legislative priorities, but their process is much different from what Supervisors Mills and Tofanelli have proposed. The San Joaquin list of priorities is very comprehensive and includes a wide range of topics such as agriculture, community development, economic development, emergency services, health care and public works. The San Joaquin board "has

developed legislative proposals focused on policy and funding requests that the County deems absolutely critical to the health and well-being of our residents and shared constituents.” You may read their legislative priorities here:

<https://www.sjgov.org/cao/dynamic?id=6552>.

San Joaquin priorities are established during a strategic planning session for the entire board that lasts all day. This session only takes place after all department heads have provided a vision for their departments and a list of needs to accomplish that vision.

Here is a link to a *Record* article that basically describes the San Joaquin process:

<http://www.recordnet.com/article/20151117/NEWS/151119731>.

If there is going to be a process, please consider expanding the scope of the process to cover all intergovernmental interactions with state and federal agencies, not just legislation. Identify grants for which the County could apply to meet transportation safety, alternative energy, water conservation, recreation, sustainable economic development, and workforce housing needs, for example. Increase efforts by County staff to more effectively interface with state and federal agencies to meet goals regarding cost savings, climate change, water quality, fire safety, habitat conservation, state highways, and more.

At the least, we respectfully request that if you do establish a committee to set legislative priorities for Calaveras County that it is a standing committee and not an ad hoc committee. We further request that the standing committee solicit input from department heads, non-governmental organizations, members of the public, as well as special districts within Calaveras County. Please do not approve the proposed ad hoc committee.

Sincerely,

Muriel Zeller

cc:

Tom Infusino, Calaveras Planning Coalition Facilitator

Colleen Platt, Secretary, MyValleySprings.com

Katherine Evatt, Foothill Conservancy Board President