September 18, 2017

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 1499 (Gray) – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I respectfully request your signature on Assembly Bill 1499. AB 1499, authored by Assembly Member Adam Gray, would dedicate an amount equal to a small portion of the State's share of sales and use tax collected from transactions at fairgrounds to support the network of fairs. RCRC is an association of thirty-five rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

The health and viability of each county’s local fair and fairgrounds – whether state-owned/operated or county-owned - is a high priority of our member counties. These fairs and fairgrounds are an integral asset to many counties throughout the State, particularly in rural California. The property is utilized throughout the year for numerous community events and livestock activities. Additionally, these properties are utilized by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and others as an evacuation center and public safety command center during catastrophic wildfires and other emergencies.

Prior to the most recent fiscal years, state fairs received approximately $30 million in financial assistance from the State – either proceeds from horse race wagering or State General Fund support. Due to the lack of funding in recent years, many fairs and fairgrounds – particularly in rural areas - are on the brink of elimination. While the 2017-18 State Budget maintains this ongoing commitment of $2.6 million for the support of local fairs, RCRC believes additional monies are needed.

AB 1499 would be a significant step in assuring the long-term viability of the networks of fairs and the fairgrounds. Many of the fairgrounds that serve such a critical role for the State and local community in which they are located remain in jeopardy.
without a sustainable source of funding. As your Administration conducts a variety of fiscal analyses of AB 1499, we would encourage a review of costs that CAL FIRE and other state disaster-related agencies would incur if they no longer have access to fairground facilities – a scenario that is extremely plausible if further funding is not provided. AB 1499 provides another critical link for the operations and maintenance of the fairgrounds.

Again, RCRC respectfully requests your signature on AB 1499.

Sincerely,

PAUL A. SMITH
Vice President Governmental Affairs

cc: The Honorable Adam Gray, Member of the State Assembly
Ms. Karen Ross, Secretary, California Department of Food & Agriculture
Mr. Ken Pimlott, Director, CAL FIRE