



VC COLAB to hold First Annual Meeting

By Lynn Gray Jensen

On September 27th, VC COLAB will hold our first Annual Meeting at Limoniera in Santa Paula (Flyer Page 2). The meeting will be a combination of business, including the election of Board Members, and a celebration of our first year’s successes. In 11 months we have signed up over 250 members who are like minded in the pursuit of freedom in a world of ever increasing bureaucratic intrusion.

Our guest speaker will be Tom Nassif, President and CEO of Western Growers since 2002. In 2010, Mr. Nassif testified to the U.S. Congress about the interpretation of the Endangered Species Act: How EPA Court Settlements Affect Farmers. This is a key example of the burden of rigid regulations that are a disincentive to important American industries.

In a recent article published in Civil Engineering News by Steven Eckler, entitled “Creating a Balanced Regulatory Environment”, the opening paragraph echoes our point of view: “When it comes to our regulatory environment, we are out of balance. Job-creating initiatives often are stalled by procedural delays that may not benefit our economy or environment. Regulatory efforts need to shift from an emphasis on procedures to one on substance, while acknowledging that

balancing protection of the environment is not against enhancing the future of sustainable economic development. . .” In considering suggestions for creating a balanced regulatory environment, Mr. Eckler points out: “Based on the idea that economic freedom is the foundation for individual success and prosperity, Congress enacted the Regulatory Flexibility Act in 1980, which required agencies to consider the economic impact of rulemaking on small businesses and jurisdictions.”

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What our members are experiencing when dealing with local agencies is a lack of concern for the cost, timeframe and substance of the requirements. Local agency processes need reform but pressure to change requires a systematic and dedicated effort, with large participation of those who create and retain jobs. We can be the nucleus for change if we continue to expand our membership and become more active in the political process.



Ventura County Changes Rules for Business Licenses

On June 30th, the County Treasurer-Tax Collector sent letters to 900 business license holders in Ventura County informing them that they would need proof of a Zoning Clearance from the County Planning Division prior to renewal. The Tax Collector’s Office revealed that they were informed only 2 days before the letters were sent that the Planning Division would be enforcing a policy that was on their books but not previously enforced. The letter further threatened penalties for payments after July 31st explaining that this was required by law. In addition, the letter stated: “we will be conducting random audits this year” with no indication of prior notice. Auditors need only to have a Ventura County photo ID “in their possession”. Unfortunately the Tax Collector is required to follow the policies dictated by Planning.

(Business Licenses: Continued from Page 1)

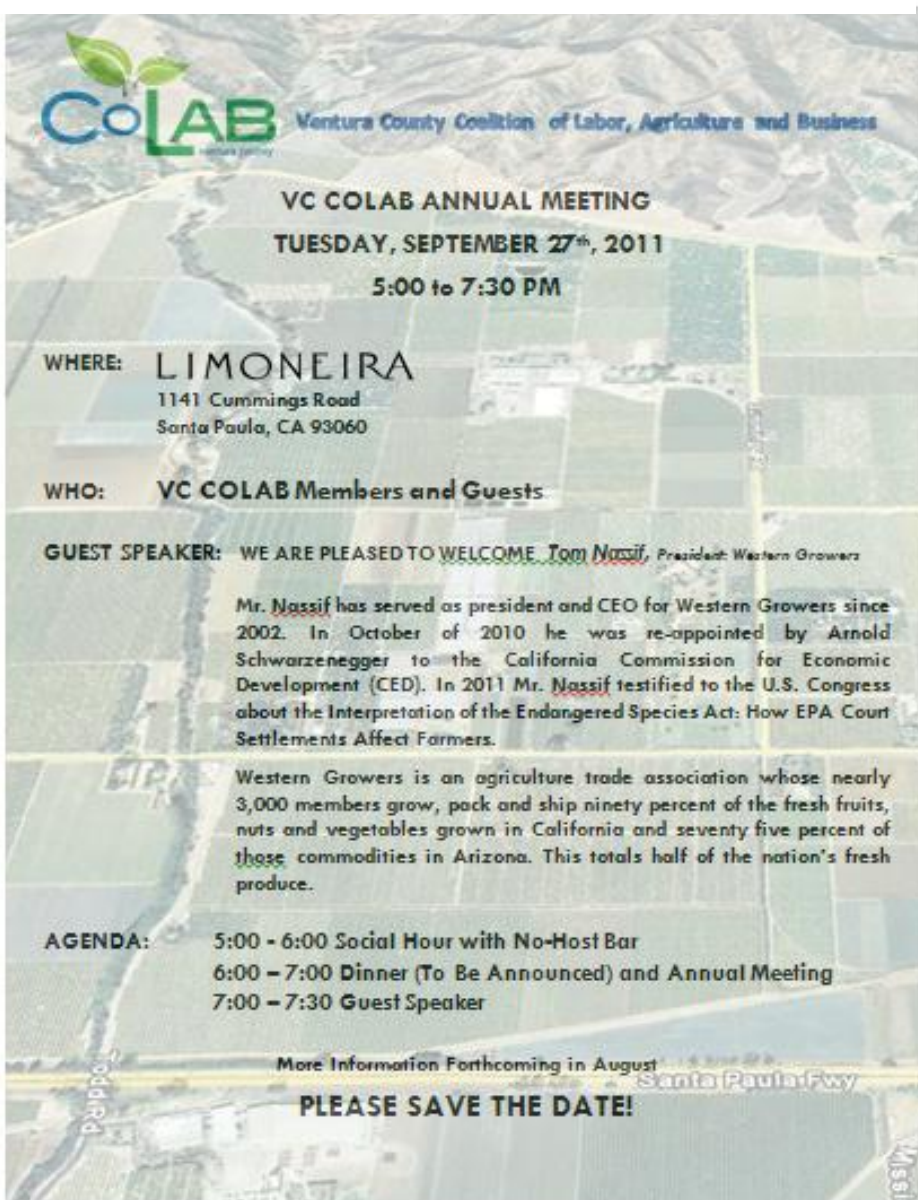
In fact, in the last year, the Resource Management Agency (RMA) has been beefing up their Code Enforcement Department, hiring personnel and adding a new “Administrative Penalties” section to their code.

Many of our members were caught off guard and some were asking: “So what exactly is a Zoning Clearance and how much red tape does it take to get one?” A Zoning Clearance is a County use permit that grants business or property owners the right to certain activities on their land per complex zoning codes. The zoning codes are subject to interpretation and are changed by the RMA with only minimum notification to affected parties. In fact, the rules are revised regularly by a 3 vote majority of the Board of Supervisors (BOS). As an example, in 1986, the BOS voted to change the entire north half of the County to Open Space

General Plan designation and zoning without any regard for the small restaurant, recreation and service businesses along the remote sections of State Highway 33, north of Ojai. One day their businesses were legal – the next their dreams were taken away. How are these kinds of policies justified from the perspective of protecting the health and safety of county residents? In reality this policy has led to continuous revenue to RMA in permit fees from these owners with no real long term solution offered by the agency. This tactic is commonly referred to as “charge and stall” by applicants. “Get to Excellence” has provided little to no relief for applicants despite County reported statistics.

With unemployment in Ventura County averaging 10.4% for 18 months, small businesses that have been receiving annual license renewals for many years are asking themselves “why now”? Times are tough for small businesses trying to weather the economic storm. One of our VC COLAB members suggested he would give up, close his business down, lay off his workers and go to work for Walmart rather than wrestle with the County bureaucracy.

In addition, the County is complicit in allowing the issuance of licenses to businesses that consistently pay business taxes year after year based on their gross revenues (not profit). These businesses have invested in property improvements only to be told years later that they needed permits. This policy change benefits one agency over another and is counter-productive. While RMA will collect extra fees, countless small businesses will close reducing revenue to the Business Tax Bureau. When will we see new policies in this County that PROMOTE job creation, rather than threats of penalties, audits, paperwork and fees. How bad does it need to get before the politicians begin to consider the welfare of their constituents?



CoLAB Ventura County Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business

VC COLAB ANNUAL MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27th, 2011
5:00 to 7:30 PM

WHERE: LIMONEIRA
 1141 Cummings Road
 Santa Paula, CA 93060

WHO: VC COLAB Members and Guests

GUEST SPEAKER: WE ARE PLEASED TO WELCOME Tom Nassif, President Western Growers

Mr. Nassif has served as president and CEO for Western Growers since 2002. In October of 2010 he was re-appointed by Arnold Schwarzenegger to the California Commission for Economic Development (CED). In 2011 Mr. Nassif testified to the U.S. Congress about the Interpretation of the Endangered Species Act: How EPA Court Settlements Affect Farmers.

Western Growers is an agriculture trade association whose nearly 3,000 members grow, pack and ship ninety percent of the fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables grown in California and seventy five percent of those commodities in Arizona. This totals half of the nation's fresh produce.

AGENDA:
 5:00 - 6:00 Social Hour with No-Host Bar
 6:00 - 7:00 Dinner (To Be Announced) and Annual Meeting
 7:00 - 7:30 Guest Speaker

More Information Forthcoming in August

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!



VC COLAB July Member Meeting at Water's Ranches

In a rousing speech to VC COLAB members and guests on July 27th, Mike Stoker presented an insightful view of the "Status of the State Budget." Mike is an attorney whose practice emphasizes land use, business law and government with budgetary experience gained while serving on the Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors. He attributes the California budget crisis to several key factors: primarily the growth of public employee costs and the disincentive to businesses through over-regulation.

Public employee costs have risen from 18% of the state budget in

1965 to 64% in 2010. In the 6 1/2 years Schwarzenegger was Governor 79,000 new state jobs were added. Over the last 3 years, while private businesses throughout the State have been downsizing, not one state job has been eliminated.

In speaking about over-regulation, Mike quoted a 2009 study by Dr. Sanjay Varshney, Dean of the Business School at Cal State Sacramento. The study finds that the total cost of regulation to the State of California is \$493 billion which is almost five times the State's general fund budget, and almost a third of the State's gross product. The cost of regulation results in an employment loss of 3.8 million jobs which is a tenth of the State's population.

Time to turn the ship around!



VC COLAB Lawsuit Update

Attorney David Chatfield will be representing the plaintiffs in a demurrer hearing set for August 23rd. Ventura County Counsel submitted a document alleging that the Bio ISAG is not a "project" and therefore not subject to CEQA.



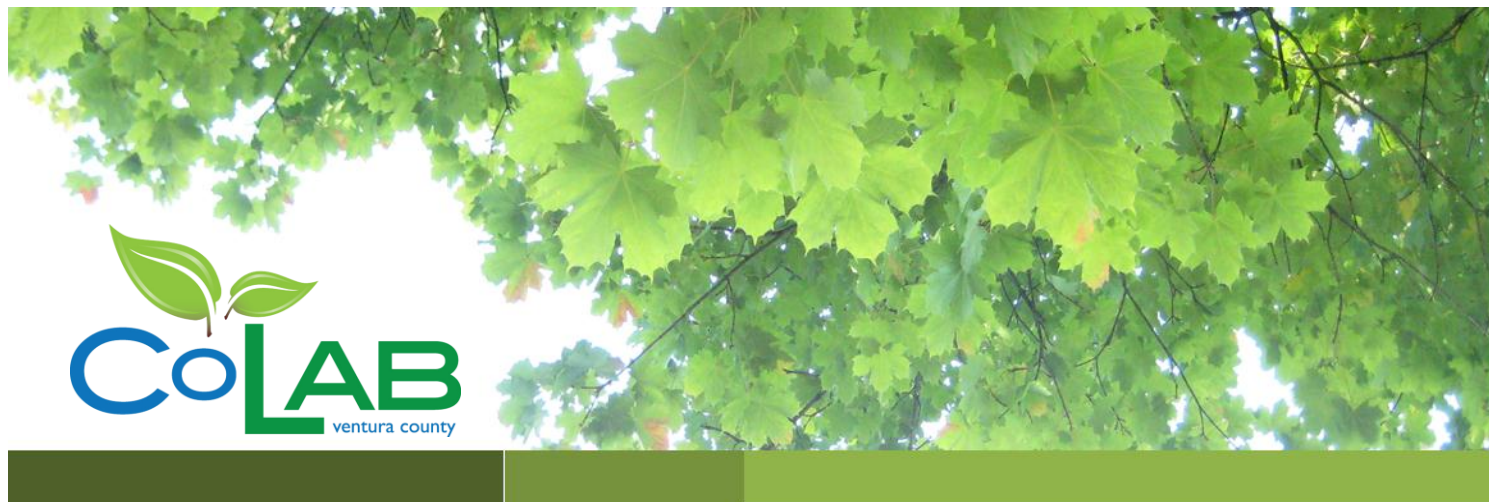
VC COLAB June Event Walnut Grove Weddings

On a perfect Wednesday in Moorpark, Walnut Grove Weddings and Water's Ranches hosted a membership drive serving up burgers in the sunshine. The event lasted into the afternoon with many members and prospective members exchanging ideas and contact information. Special thanks to our hosts!

Board of Directors

- Tim Cohen (Rancho Temescal): Chairman
- Jurgen Gramckow (Southland Sod): Vice Chairman
- Bud Sloan (Sloan Ranches): President
- Dennis Kuttler (Lowthrop Richards Attorneys): Treasurer / Director
- Lynn Gray Jensen: Secretary / Executive Director
- Fred Ferro (NAI Capital): Director

- Kenneth High (NCHC Attorneys): Director
- Casey Houweling (Houweling Nurseries): Director
- Elaine Krankl (Sin Qua Non): Director
- Kioren Moss (Moss & Associates): Director
- Jack Poe (Kirchbaum & Assoc.): Director
- Alex Teague (Limoniera): Director
- Patty Waters (Water's Ranches): Director



**Ventura County Coalition of
Labor, Agriculture and Business**

P.O. Box 4237, Ventura, CA 93007
Email: membership@colabvc.org
www.colabvc.org

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I would like to apply for an Active Membership at the following level:

- \$100 Individual - Promote economic vitality and individual rights in Ventura County
- \$500 Business - Promote the common business interests of **VC COLAB** Members
- \$1,000 Gold - Further our efforts to monitor, educate and represent our common business interests
- \$1,500 Platinum - Support ongoing research to challenge harmful and unreasonable regulation
- \$2,500 Black - Advance legal and administrative action for the mutual benefit of **VC COLAB** members
- \$5,000 Benefactor - Let's make a difference in the business climate of Ventura County

Please accept my membership fee of: \$ _____

In addition I would like to contribute: \$ _____

Total contribution payable to **VC COLAB, Inc.** \$ _____

Print this form and send with a check to the P.O. Box or contribute online with PayPal

Individual or Representative (for voting) _____

Name of Business _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email Address _____

Occupation _____

How did you hear about us? _____

Reason(s) for applying for membership: _____