



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact:** Louise Lampara  
805-633-2257  
[llampara@colabvc.org](mailto:llampara@colabvc.org)

**VCCoLAB and VCAA sue Ventura County for its adoption of the 2040 General Plan**  
*Lawsuit alleges detrimental impacts to the agriculture industry, failure to comply with state law regarding General Plan development, and failure to engage Latino residents.*

Ventura, CA - October 15, 2020 – Today, the Ventura County Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business (VCCoLAB) and the Ventura County Agricultural Association (VCAA) jointly filed a lawsuit against the County of Ventura in response to the adoption of the County's 2040 General Plan. VCCoLAB and VCAA assert the County did not meet the basic standards demanded by law for both public review and engagement and environmental impact analysis, resulting in a Plan that detrimentally impacts the agricultural industry, local businesses, and vulnerable populations.

A General Plan sets the foundation for regulations under which a community shall live and work for decades into the future and must reflect both the needs and the aspirations of the community for which it is written. Public engagement and due process are essential, particularly in a County with a significant minority community speaking multiple languages and dialects.

But the County failed to include a significant part of the community in the development of the General Plan. "It is disappointing that the County thought so little of our Latino community that it either deliberately ignored us or was poorly advised by its staff against meeting with organizations that would have counseled against the General Plan because of its disproportionate negative impact upon communities of color," says David Cruz, President of Council #3288 of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). "The County did not even translate any of the plan's policies into Spanish so we could review and comment prior to its adoption, despite the fact we make up 43% of the population," added Cruz.

The General Plan adopted by the County will raise the cost of living, increase housing prices, and harm job recovery and growth. "The County rushed final approval of the General Plan and failed to consider the economic impact of several new policies and programs that will likely have a negative impact on Ventura County's tax revenue and jobs and will result in increased costs to county residents," says David Grau, President of the Ventura County Taxpayers Association. In addition, the Plan will significantly increase the cost of farming – making it more difficult for local growers to compete with growers in other counties, states and countries and impacting local agricultural revenues and jobs.

"Our members are concerned that the General Plan adds regulatory burdens that greatly increase the cost of doing business, growing food, and even living in Ventura County," says Louise Lampara, VCCoLAB Executive Director. "Hundreds of community members spoke out against the General Plan, telling the County that their policies will hurt already struggling families by making it even more expensive to live here and more difficult for the next generation of workers to find local employment - but the County ignored their concerns."

The General Plan fails to even mention and consider the most significant issue confronting the world today – the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, more than 25% of Ventura County workers have filed for unemployment and other assistance benefits. State records show that COVID-related job losses disproportionately impact Latinos and other minorities. “A prime example of the consequences of this omission is the impact of COVID-19 and the lack of addressing its long term impact on the employment, unemployment, housing and health disparities confronting farmworkers in a county where agriculture is a major employer of a predominant Latino workforce,” states Arnoldo Torres, Public Policy Consultant to Clinicas del Camino Real (CDCR) the largest health care provider to farmworkers in the United States (source: Health Resources and Services Administration of the federal government).

The agriculture industry is an essential part of the Ventura County economy, history and culture. “My family has been farming in Ventura County for over 60 years. We have never faced the economic challenges that we are facing today. The General Plan adds new costs and new red tape but does nothing to help the agricultural industry survive economically,” says Elaine Cavaletto of Rancho Cream Farm, Somis, California. “Those costs will end up being passed on to the consumer – this Plan hurts everyone.”

“For years, VCCoLAB and VCAA have tried to work with the County to ensure that the 2040 General Plan provides a framework that supports a vibrant and robust agricultural industry and a strong and growing economy for all Ventura County residents,” says Lampara. “The County’s disregard of the concerns of our members and the greater community has forced us to file this action to protect our way of life. Ventura County deserves a General Plan that not only support job growth and a reasonable cost of living, but also represents our entire community.”

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#### **ABOUT VENTURA COUNTY CoLAB**

Ventura County Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business is a non-profit organization that represents over 500 members consisting of citizens, labor, organizations, businesses, and agricultural interests in Ventura County. VC CoLAB was created to build influence by establishing a broad coalition of informed stakeholders, experts, and advocates to promote a strong local economy while preserving the local quality of life. We actively promote sensible and rational regulatory oversight and advocate for both businesses and local property rights through monitoring local government actions, providing expertise, research, and educational campaigns to inform both our members and the public. For more information, visit [www.colabvc.org](http://www.colabvc.org).