



**Texas Wine &
Grape Growers
Association**

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December 22, 2008

President-Elect Obama
Presidential Transition Committee
Washington, DC 20270

Dear President-Elect Obama:

On behalf of the Texas Wine and Grape Growers Association, the only advocacy organization representing the state-wide industry, we strongly support the appointment of Karen Ross as Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Our support is rooted in Ms. Ross's inclusive efforts to work for the good of our national industry. As an emerging state industry, Texas could have easily been overlooked by Ms. Ross as she worked with states boasting larger industries. However, she has always been generous with her attention and guidance and has a keen sense for soliciting sufficient feedback from sufficient stakeholder groups to develop programs that work. It also warrants mentioning that the wine and grape industry attracts individuals from diverse backgrounds. Ms. Ross has shown herself to be particularly savvy at working with and motivating various groups and subgroups for the good of our industry. In our opinion, these characteristics are tantamount to the characteristics in individuals responsible for the leadership of effective government agencies.

We also lend our support due to Ms. Ross's commitment to science and research that impacts the success of farms. An example would be her tireless work for the Pierce's Disease Program that ultimately has developed best practices for farmers to control and contain the disease. This has not only been important for farms in California, but has impacted farms across the nation. While continued work on this program is necessary for our industry's economic potential to be reached, Ms. Ross's stewardship of the program has been instrumental to date.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Neal Newsom
President
Texas Wine and Grape Growers Association