FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Turning Vineyard Waste into Opportunity, SB 279 Heads to Governor's Desk

SACRAMENTO, September 18, 2025 – Legislation co-sponsored by the California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG) was approved last week in the final days of the 2025 legislative session. SB 279 (McNerney) will make it easier for growers across California to compost agricultural waste on their land without needing a CalRecycle (Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery) permit.

"Composting contributes to healthy soil efforts while increasing carbon sequestration. With vineyard acres continuing to be removed throughout the state, that material becomes a powerful feedstock," said Natalie Collins, President of the California Association of Winegrape Growers. "While composting isn't the right fit for every operation, SB 279 reduces regulatory burden and creates a practical, on-farm way to turn waste into a climate tool."

SB 279 reflects winegrowers' commitment to sustainability and land stewardship. This important legislation recognizes two realities:

- Growers are purposefully contracting acreage to match shrinking demand, which is generating large volumes of vineyard wood and other organic byproducts across California, with few viable disposal options.
- Growers are not waste haulers or commercial composters. It makes no sense to regulate on-farm handling of their own organic material like a hauling or commercial composting business by requiring them to get a permit from CalRecycle.

CAWG is also seeking increased funding for alternatives to open agricultural burning. In the Central Valley, growers face escalating costs and lengthy delays as they attempt to dispose of removed vineyards. Identifying and funding viable alternatives is a must for growers in the Central Valley.

SB 279 was co-sponsored by CAWG, California Alliance for Community Composting, Californians Against Waste, People Food & Land Foundation, Western Tree Nut Association, California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association, and The Climate Center. Wine Institute, Family Winemakers of California, and several other organizations also supported this legislation.

Governor Newsom has until October 13 to act on SB 279.

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About the California Association of Winegrape Growers: CAWG is a statewide nonprofit trade association advocating for California's winegrape growers to ensure the sustainability of the winegrape industry. CAWG promotes the industry's long-term success by advancing the adoption of sound public policies and fostering awareness and understanding of winegrape growers' contributions to the economy, environment, and California communities. Learn more at cawg.org.