

August \_\_\_\_\_, 2006

The Honorable XX  
Senate of Virginia/Virginia House of Delegates  
Address

Dear Senator XX/Delegate YY:

I am the owner/manager of a licensed Virginia farm winery in the County of \_\_\_\_\_ and a constituent of yours. The purpose of this letter is twofold. I would like to invite you and a guest to come visit my winery this fall so I can give you a tour of my operation. However, I would also like to spend some time talking with you about an issue of great importance to me and the Virginia wine industry as a whole. That issue is the ability of a farm winery to "self distribute" -- to act as our own wholesaler by selling and delivering our wine directly to Virginia shops and restaurants.

When the General Assembly created the farm winery license in 1980, it thoughtfully exempted farm wineries from Virginia's "three-tier" system of alcohol distribution. In doing so, it acknowledged that it was not economical for small wineries to use traditional wholesalers to get wine into the marketplace. During the early years, winery owners create a market and brand recognition through personal relationships with shop and restaurant owners as we self distribute our wine. While at some point in our business growth we have enough brand recognition and production to warrant using a wholesaler, without the right of self distribution few wineries reach that size.

Last year the federal courts struck down our self distribution privilege, since it was not given to out of state wineries as well. The Virginia wineries tried to resolve the problem with legislation during the 2006 Session, but to no avail. We will likely try again in 2007 with new ideas for creating a constitutionally valid law that allows us to continue self distributing and we hope to have your support.

So that you might better understand this complicated issue, I would be pleased to tell you how this issue affects me. Please give me a call at ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ to suggest a meeting date that is convenient. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,