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Hello, my name is David Hengst.

I'm here tonight representing my family and community's concerns. Farming at the best of times is a fragile house of cards. Take out any one component, be it favorable weather, good production, commodity price, working capital, farmable acreage, adequate water, etc., and the whole house will come tumbling down. I am a 5th generation farmer in Elderwood; my family and I have battled to keep this house of cards, which is Hengst Farms, profitable for over 100 years. We have experienced many trials and losses and have had to adapt our farming many times, attempting to stay profitable. Luckily each frugal generation has been able to leave a little more farm land for the next; land that increases in value and is really the only offset to the highs and mostly lows of farming.

Farmers are aware of all the things that can go wrong during each crop year and take them in stride, always hoping for a better 'next year.' What we cannot digest are outside negative affects that are 100% man-made and have nothing to do with the weather, markets, pests, labor, or the cost of tea in China. Alternative Routes 2 and 6 will not just have a negative effect upon Hengst Farms, they will produce a devastating Class Five tornado affect upon Hengst Farms' house of cards.

My father Bob Hengst has already spoken about the Route 2 caused loss of our wells; one, a wagon-wheel well which irrigates 230 acres of plums, oranges, and pomegranates cannot be duplicated, so let me now speak to some of the negative monetary affects to Hengst Farms. Over the next 50 years the loss of those 230 acres at an average net return of \$2000 per acre is 23 million dollars. The flat land on the Sentinel Butte property is so cut up by Routes 2 and 6 that no other use other than cattle grazing is possible. We have always tried to keep the country, 'country' and avoided selling property for houses. However, the loss of potential home sites and the freedom future generations would have in selling them will cause a loss of 27 million dollars or more. Together, we're looking at about 50 million dollars loss to my generation and the next. We can legitimately count the cost to the next generation because my family has been farming and ranching in Elderwood since the early 1900's and we are raising our kids to continue this tradition into the future. Has Edison considered the deeper costs? Has the CPUC? Maybe Route 3 isn't the most expensive route.

Has anybody researched the danger to farm workers under the lines? Carrying ladders, operating forklifts, boom trucks working on pumps, etc. do not seem like safe things to do. My uncle had to always keep the bob-wire grounded when he was building fence under the existing Visalia Rector lines to avoid getting a very powerful shock. Will insurance companies continue to offer affordable liability insurance? Will banks offer lines of credit to farms with an obvious high risk? How can the CPUC authorize Routes 1, 2, or 6 through farm land when Edison itself has stated that permission must be granted to even park under the lines?

And what about the cost to our community? In the old west when the bad guys robbed the bank they were stealing from the whole town. Has anybody added up the Edison Robbery ripple effect. Every acre either temporarily or permanently lost to farming means that much less work available in the community, that much less money spent in the community, that much less tax dollars paid in the community, and that many more people who either become a burden on the community or get fed up and leave California altogether.

Tulare County is already facing some of the highest unemployment in the country; do we really need to force it higher? We only need to look to the West Side of the Valley to see the truth of how much devastation to a community can be caused by one poor decision. I appreciate the CPUC allowing this meeting for additional input on the Alternative Cross Valley Routes before they make their decision. I pray that they will not make a decision to go with Routes 2, 6, or 1, which will be nearly as devastating to our communities as the Delta Smelt ruling was to the West Side. I am confident wisdom will prevail and they will instead choose Route 3A which avoids farmland, homes, and the Vernal Pools; Vernal Pools, by-the-way, that will need to be 'gotten around' when future new lines are needed in the north.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,

David Hengst
Elderwood lover

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