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ACLU OPPOSES COUNTY SEIZURE OF Veteran's Land Over Bungled Weed Abatement Action

**County Tax Collector McAllister's response to man on veteran's disability:
set up a payment plan for \$63,000 lien**

SAN DIEGO, *Calif.* - The California Chaparral Institute and several veteran's groups have been joined by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in asking San Diego County and the San Diego Rural Fire Protection District (SDRFPD) to cease plans to auction off a veteran's home of thirty years to satisfy a questionable weed abatement lien. The lien was placed on Joseph Diliberti's land in 2004 after Fire Prevention Services, a private company hired by the SDRFPD, cleared less than a half acre of native habitat on Diliberti's property while he was away on vacation. He was charged \$25,000 for the work. The county paid the company and established the lien. The lien has now grown to over \$63,000 due to penalties and interest.

"The ACLU believes the lien and auction would unfairly deprive Mr. Diliberti of his home," ACLU Executive Director Kevin Keenan wrote to the fire district. "We urge you to seek an alternative solution that does not leave Mr. Diliberti homeless."

"While we support efforts to encourage citizens to establish defensible space around homes to reduce fire risk," said Richard Halsey, Director of the California Chaparral Institute, "we also strongly support private property rights. The native habitat that was cleared around Mr. Diliberti's fired-clay studio did not pose a significant risk to others or to the fire safe structures on the property. This unfortunate situation is the result of a government bureaucracy being given too much power over a private citizen's life without appropriate checks and balances."

Mr. Diliberti and his supporters **will be holding a rally on June 1** at the Jamul Indian Village across the street from the new fire station at 14024 Peaceful Valley Rd in Jamul at 4:30PM, prior to attending the SDRFPD board meeting at 7PM.

The letter from the ACLU can be downloaded here:

[http://www.californiachaparral.org/images/ACLU Letter in support of Joseph Diliberti.pdf](http://www.californiachaparral.org/images/ACLU%20Letter%20in%20support%20of%20Joseph%20Diliberti.pdf)

For an audio slide show from the Los Angeles Times that describes Joseph Diliberti's art studio and the native landscape surrounding it, please view the following:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/custom/topofthetimes/topstories/la-me-weeds-ss,0,4653627.htmlstory>

For additional information on this matter please visit:

<http://www.californiachaparral.org/helpjosephdiliberti.html>

The California Chaparral Institute (CCI) is a non-profit science and educational organization dedicated to promoting an understanding of and respect for Mediterranean-type ecosystems, helping the public and government agencies create sustainable, fire safe communities, encouraging citizens to reconnect with and enjoy their local, natural environments, and preserving healthy native habitats for all living things. www.californiachaparral.org