



Noted American Wine Regions Join Forces to Protest ICANN's Release of .wine and .vin Domain Names

Nearly 2,000 American wineries decry misappropriation of hard-fought regional name recognition

7/2/2014 - St. Helena, CA—Eight noted American wine regions have banded together in opposition to the rights-to-the-highest-bidder release of generic top level domain names (gTLDs) such as .wine and .vin by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). The regional wine organizations that are driving the opposition include the Oregon Winegrowers Association (545 wineries), the Napa Valley Vintners (500 wineries), Sonoma County Vintners (230 wineries), Willamette Valley Wineries Association (200 wineries), Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance (160 wineries), the Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association (150 wineries), the Walla Walla Wine Alliance (75 wineries) and the Long Island Wine Council (48 wineries).

These eight organizations, which collectively represent nearly 2,000 wineries, are voicing strong objections to the issuing of the .wine and .vin gTLDs, citing non-existent to grossly insufficient safeguards from illegitimate companies hijacking the history of fine winemaking in America and the rigorous, multi-generational efforts that have gone into creating, promoting and protecting quality winemaking regions across the country.

ICANN was established in the early days of the Internet to direct Web traffic to the correct servers and websites.

If granted to unscrupulous bidders, second-level domain names such as napavalley.wine or wallawalla.wine could be held in perpetuity by a company or individual that has never seen a vineyard, cultivated fine wine grapes or made a single bottle of wine.

“When it comes to fine wine, the distinctive expression of place matters a great deal,” noted Tom Danowski, executive director for the Oregon Winegrowers Association. “The importance of protecting the quality reputations of our fine winegrowing regions is what concerns us about ICANN’s recent action on domain names such as .wine or .vin. Fine wine consumers could be deceived into believing that they are visiting a website associated with a genuine product exhibiting the specific qualities and unique characteristics of a growing region, when they are in fact being influenced by an imitator who happened to be the highest bidder for that particular domain name.”

Citing the potential for consumer confusion and possible negative economic impact on the American fine wine industry, members of Congress, including Mike Thompson of California’s 5th District and Anna G. Eshoo, of California’s 18th District have appealed to both ICANN and the U.S.

National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to delay or permanently stop the issuing of these domain names.

Of special concern in these discussions is an incorrect and misleading statement by the NTIA's senior telecommunications policy advisor and U.S. advisor to ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee, Suzanne Radell, that it is "just three U.S. wineries out of thousands and thousands" that are objecting to issuing of the .wine and .vin gTLDs while addressing ICAAN's public meetings held in London last week. The coalition of American quality wine regions representing nearly 2,000 U.S. wineries clearly contradicts Radell's testimony in London on June 22.

The Oregon Winegrowers Association, Napa Valley Vintners, Sonoma County Vintners, Willamette Valley Wineries Association, Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance, Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association, Walla Walla Wine Alliance and the Long Island Wine Council are also signatories of the Joint Declaration to Protect Wine Place & Origin, founded in 2005.

About the Napa Valley Vintners

The Napa Valley Vintners nonprofit trade association has been cultivating excellence for 70 years by inspiring its 500 members to produce consistent quality wines, provide environmental leadership and care for the extraordinary place they call home. Learn more at napavintners.com.

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