

July 25, 2013

Dear Senator,

On behalf of our millions of members, we the undersigned environmental organizations are writing to urge you to oppose any amendment to the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act (S-761) that would weaken the Federal government's support for healthier, more energy- and resource-efficient buildings and for the responsible management and conservation of the world's forests.

Specifically, we oppose any amendment that would restrict or prohibit federal agencies from using the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating system. LEED is a proven tool for improving the environmental performance of buildings while saving taxpayers money.

LEED is a consensus-based leadership standard in building design, construction and operation. LEED distinguishes itself from other building design standards because, among other attributes: 1) it encourages greater transparency in building materials so that dangerous and toxic chemicals are not unknowingly used; and 2) it provides recognition for wood products from leadership certifications that require more than legal forestry practices.

However, special interests are working to prevent the use of LEED in government buildings precisely because LEED encourages leadership forestry practices and material transparency. The environmental community opposes special-interest backed legislation that favors weaker environmental standards, or creates false equivalencies. We strongly oppose any such amendment or any other veiled attempt to restrict the use of LEED or recognize a weaker rating system dominated by few industries as equivalent, and urge you do the same.

The federal government's use of LEED has been an unequivocal success. More than 1,000 federal projects have achieved LEED certification. The LEED-certified U.S. Treasury Building is saving taxpayers \$3.5 million each year, and a review of the General Service Administration's LEED Gold buildings found that they cost 19 percent less to operate.¹ Also, a report from the National Academy of Sciences recommended that Department of Defense buildings should achieve LEED Silver or equivalent.² In addition, the private sector has overwhelmingly embraced LEED as the system of choice. Eighty-eight of the Fortune 100 are using LEED to demonstrate leadership in green building. And, every day, businesses are certifying 1.5 million square feet of real estate to LEED.

Please don't let bad actors in the chemical and timber industry tarnish the federal government's stellar record on green buildings.

¹ http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/Green_Building_Performance.pdf

² <http://www8.nationalacademies.org/onpinews/newsitem.aspx?RecordID=18282>

Sincerely,

Bill Snape
Senior Counsel
Center for Biological Diversity

Dave Werntz
Science and Conservation Director
Conservation Northwest

Denis Hayes
Founder
Earth Day

Kathleen Rogers
President
Earth Day Network

Richard A. Denison, Ph.D.
Senior Scientist
Environmental Defense Fund

Rolf Skar
Forests Campaign Director
Greenpeace

Franz A. Matzner
Associate Director of Government Affairs
Natural Resources Defense Council

Tyson Slocum
Director, Energy Program
Public Citizen

Dave Hamilton
Director for Clean Energy, Beyond Coal Campaign
Sierra Club

Peter Goldman
Director & Managing Attorney
Washington Forest Law Center