



April 4, 2017

The Honorable Doug LaMalfa
322 Cannon House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kurt Schrader
2431 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Dear Representatives LaMalfa and Schrader:

I am writing on behalf of the American Public Power Association (APPA or Association) to express our support for the Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act. APPA is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power 2,000 cities and towns nationwide. We represent public power before the federal government to protect the interests of more than 49 million people that public power utilities serve, and the 93,000 people they employ.

The proper management of vegetation near electric infrastructure located on federal lands is important to ensure electric reliability and prevent wildfires. Vegetation that makes contact with electric infrastructure could result in power outages and forest fires. Properly maintained rights-of-way (ROW) also increase public safety and provide environmental benefits. APPA is pleased to support reintroduction of this important legislation to facilitate vegetation management on federal lands, including hazardous and high-risk vegetation outside of ROW. The bill will enhance the reliability of the electricity grid and reduce the threat of wildfires to and from electric transmission and distribution facilities located on such lands.

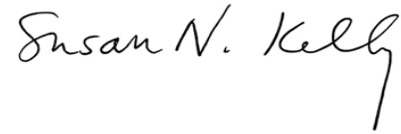
As noted in the Department of Energy's Quadrennial Energy Review (QER) in 2015, the August 14, 2003, Northeast blackout was caused by inadequate vegetation management (tree pruning and removal). In investigating the cause of the blackout, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) found that vegetation management approvals on federally managed ROW are particularly problematic due to permitting and environmental requirements that are inconsistent and time-consuming. In the case of federal lands, the inability of utilities to remove vegetation beyond their easement presents a major obstacle in protecting the electrical infrastructure. Not only must long-reaching tree branches be pruned to avoid contact with transmission lines, but brush and other ground vegetation must be periodically cleared from the base of transmission towers to minimize the effects of fires.

The Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act will provide the consistency and flexibility needed by the Association's members to treat potentially dangerous trees and facilitate access to and clearance of ROW where transmission lines and associated facilities are located, while also protecting public power utilities from liability when federal agencies fail to allow utilities to manage the vegetation in

and around ROW.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue affecting electric utilities. I hope you will feel free to contact me or the APPA government relations staff with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan N. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, vertical tail on the letter "y".

Susan N. Kelly
President & CEO