

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

JACK HOWARD
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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce urges you to approve H.R. 1873, the “Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act,” which would enhance the reliability of the electricity grid and reduce the threat of wildfires on Federal lands. The Chamber may consider including votes on, or in relation to, H.R. 1873 in our annual *How They Voted* scorecard.

When federally mandated vegetation management activities do not take place on a timely basis, significant adverse consequences can occur, including blackouts and forest fires. In fact, a fallen tree caused the 2003 blackout of 51 million electricity customers across the eastern half of the U.S. In just 2012-2013, the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) reported 345 wildfires connected with power line tree contacts on its lands

H.R. 1873 would amend the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to ensure that needed vegetation management activities can occur without undue – and potentially disastrous – delay. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manage a combined 437 million acres of land, including 18,000 linear miles of electrical right-of-way on Forest Service lands and 71,613 miles of electrical transmission and distribution lines on BLM lands. While utility companies and their ratepayers bear the costs of operating and maintaining these electric facilities, unduly long reviews of utility vegetation management requests have prevented these essential activities from being conducted in a consistent and timely basis.

H.R. 1873 is narrowly tailored to enhance electric reliability and reduce wildfires, consistent with federal electric reliability laws and associated environmental regulations. The Chamber urges you to approve H.R. 1873.

Sincerely,



Jack Howard