

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1804

November 2, 2012

Daniel M. Tangherlini
Acting Administrator
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Administrator Tangherlini:

I am writing to stress the importance of selecting a green building certification system that recognizes all U.S. forestry certification programs in the General Services Administration's (GSA) evaluation of green building certification systems, as required by the Energy Independence Security Act of 2007.

Currently, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is GSA's preferred green building certification system. The latest proposed version of LEED only recognizes the Forest Stewardship Council's forestry certification program for its certified wood credit, which leaves out two of the largest, independently-audited forest certification programs in the United States – the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the American Tree Farm System (ATFS). Over 86 million acres of forests (or 75 percent of certified timberland) in the United States are SFI or ATFS certified, including 4.7 million in Louisiana.

This exclusion concerns me as it encourages the use of foreign-sourced wood (e.g. Russia and Finland), where FSC requirements are not as stringent as those in the U.S. Under this current version of LEED standard, 95 percent of the United States' (and 96 percent of Louisiana's) working forests will be excluded from receiving a certified wood credit. In my state, this means more than 14 million acres will be unable to receive a certified wood credit. This is a Louisiana industry that employs more than 63,000 people and exceeds \$7.2 billion in sales annually.

In 2006, GSA exclusively chose LEED at the conclusion of its last evaluation. Since that time, 88 members of Congress, 16 governors and countless stakeholders expressed strong concerns about LEED's discrimination against U.S. wood products. I would ask that GSA evaluate the proposed LEED 2012 standard to ensure that it allows fair competition between domestic and foreign producers, and consider other performance based standards should the proposed LEED 2012 standard not be revised from its current state.

In response to these concerns, GSA representatives stated that not much wood is used in their building projects. My concern resides in the precedent that is set when America's federal landlord endorses a rating system that excludes the large majority of U.S. forestland. In this economic environment, it's an especially disappointing response given how many U.S. jobs are impacted.

Since 2005, the wood products manufacturing industry, an industry that employs more Americans than the automotive manufacturing industry, has lost 20 percent of its jobs and nearly \$9 billion in wages. No federal agency, regardless of how much wood it uses, should recognize a green building rating system that arbitrarily disadvantages domestic products and jobs. Accordingly, GSA should ensure the rating systems it recognizes are neutral when it comes to forestry certification programs, to allow domestic producers to fairly compete.

Precedent is important, and so are our sustainable, working forests. This is why I ask you to join me in promoting competition, the environment, and US jobs by ensuring that efficiency standards endorsed by the GSA allow the use of all applicable forest certification standards.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator