

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 29, 2011

The Honorable Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
Department of the Navy  
2000 Navy Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20350

Dear Secretary Mabus,

Recently you announced a goal for U.S. Navy construction to be “gold” certified under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). We applaud your efforts to increase the energy and environmental standards in the area of construction. However, we are concerned that the LEED standard alone may not sufficiently reflect the countless number of sustainable materials available. Specifically, we are concerned that U.S. forest products may not be given an opportunity to compete for U.S. Navy contracts should the LEED-only standard be imposed.

As a fellow Mississippian, you are aware of the importance a healthy forest products industry is to rural communities across America. This industry provides well-paying jobs and economic development, promotes clean air and water quality, provides for wildlife habitat, and affords recreational opportunities. Furthermore, most of America’s wood products are grown by private and family-owned operations that depend on strong markets to keep these forests intact and healthy. The forestry industry generates more than 123,000 jobs across the state of Mississippi and employs over 900,000 people nationwide. In an economy that is struggling to regain footing, we must encourage the continued use of American products, such as wood, which can help America recover while also protecting our environment.

The industry has alerted us that the LEED-only policy does not adequately allow consideration of all recognized forest certification schemes, nor of environmental performance demonstrated through lifecycle analysis. We believe there may be better avenues for incorporating wood products into military construction while meeting your environmental sustainability goals.

We would urge that you or a designee from your office meet with representatives of the forest products industry to discuss this issue at your earliest convenience. Our staffs can assist in arranging for and participating in this meeting.

We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



THAD COCHRAN  
United States Senate



ROGER WICKER  
United States Senate



BENNIE THOMPSON  
U.S. House of Representatives



GREGG HARPER  
U.S. House of Representatives



STEVEN PALAZZO  
U.S. House of Representatives



ALAN NUNNELEE  
U.S. House of Representatives