



Oppose the Biomass for Transportation Fuel Act!

H.R. 7609/S. 3899: Biomass for Transportation Fuel Act – Introduced by Representative John Garamendi [D-CA-8] and Senator Angus S. King Jr. [I-ME] on March 11, 2024

Background

The forest biomass industry has grown significantly in the United States over the past decade, driven largely by the rising global demand for renewable energy sources. As renewable energy demands rise, forest biomass production facilities have expanded, particularly across the southern United States. Forest biomass products are manufactured from various forest by-products, including sawdust, logging residues, and wood waste. The rapid expansion of the forest biomass industry in the United States has resulted in significant ecological, public health, and environmental justice concerns.

More specifically, forest biomass can serve as a renewable energy feedstock for electrical generation, particularly in Europe, where biomass energy plays a notable role in achieving renewable energy targets. The increased demand for forest biomass has led to the intensification of logging activities in the US, resulting in deforestation and habitat loss for wildlife. Biomass production facilities also emit significant levels of air pollutants, which can put surrounding communities at higher risk for health complications, such as respiratory and cardiovascular conditions. Although biomass is considered renewable, the burning of wood pellets for energy releases carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the air, which contributes to climate change and degraded air quality. Increased regulatory support and financial incentives for the production and use of forest biomass in American industries, like the transportation sector, in addition to current demand from Europe, will boost domestic pellet production and further amplify environmental and public health harms.

Summary

The “Biomass for Transportation Fuel Act” was introduced to both the House of Representatives and the Senate on March 11, 2024. This legislation aims to direct the Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to qualify electricity generated from forest biomass, including wood pellets, woodchips, and sawdust, for the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) program. This legislation also directs the EPA to approve a RFS pathway for renewable energy for biomass for feedstocks currently eligible under the program (ex: forest byproducts). Additionally, the legislation would make forest biomass taken from federally-owned forestlands eligible under the RFS program, as only biomass collected from non-federal and private lands has previously been considered eligible for RFS feedstock.