

January 29, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairman, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

The undersigned organizations, representing the diversity of the forest sector from landowners and land managers to conservation, wildlife, and recreation interests, to state forestry agencies, to loggers and manufacturers, write to urge your support for the confirmation of the Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack to serve as Secretary of Agriculture. We are looking forward to the Biden Administration bringing his leadership and experience back to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

While serving as Secretary of Agriculture from 2009 until 2017, Secretary Vilsack was committed to improving the health and resilience of our nation's forests. He spearheaded essential work to ensure our forests can continue to clean our air and water, tackle our changing climate, support fish, wildlife and recreational opportunities, and sustain and grow jobs and economic opportunities in rural America. He led efforts to reduce the growing threat of wildfires and address the burgeoning costs of fighting wildfires, he strongly supported forest conservation and management programs across USDA, and he improved markets for forest products, to name a few of his important efforts for healthy resilient U.S. forests.

The forest products and forestry sector serve as an efficient carbon sink and key economic driver in many communities, particularly in rural America. The U.S. forest products industry (including paper products and wood products, forestry and logging) directly employs about 950,000 hardworking men and women in well-paying jobs with a payroll of approximately \$55 billion. Climate action through forests build on these jobs in America's forest sector, while annually sequestering 15% of U.S. carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels. In total, the sector supports about 2.5 million American jobs, and \$109 billion in payroll, mostly in rural communities. The forest products industry also ranks among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 45 states.

Our nation is increasingly relying on our forests for solutions to today's most pressing challenges: climate, drought, biodiversity protection, strong markets for paper and wood products, economic challenges in rural communities. We need a proven leader like Secretary Vilsack who is more than capable of successfully leading the Department to tackle these challenges in ways that are good for our forests, forest products, rural forested communities, and rural workers.

We appreciate your dedicated leadership to the nation's forest sector and look forward to working with you as Secretary Vilsack's confirmation moves forward.

Sincerely,

Aldo Leopold Foundation
Alliance for Green Heat
American Chestnut Foundation
American Forest & Paper Association
American Forest Foundation
American Forests
American Loggers Council
American Wood Council
American Woodcock Society
Appalachian Mountain Club
Arkansas Forestry Association
Binational Softwood Company
Biomass Thermal Energy Council
Boone and Crockett Club
Brown-Forman
Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
Connecticut Forest & Park Association
The Conservation Fund
Cumberland Springs Land Company
Empire State Forest Products Association
Enviva
Federal Forest Resource Coalition
Forest Landowners Association
Forest Products Industry National Labor
Management
Forest Resources Association
The Forestland Group LLC
Green Diamond Resource Company
Hancock Natural Resource Group
Hankins, Inc.
Hardwood Federation
Idaho Forest Group
Independent Stave Company
Innovative Natural Resource Solutions LLC
L&C Carbon LLC
Louisiana Forestry Association
LP Building Solutions
The Lyme Timber Company

Michigan Forest Association
Mississippi River Trust
Montana Forest Owners Association
National Alliance of Forest Owners
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of State Foresters
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Hardwood Lumber Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wooden Pallet & Container
Association
National Woodland Owners Association
Ohio Forestry Association
Open Space Institute
The Pacific Forest Trust
Pellet Fuels Institute
PotlatchDeltic
Rayonier
RenewWest
Resource Management Service, LLC
Ruffed Grouse Society
Sazerac
The Siuslaw Institute
Society of American Foresters
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
Sustainable Northwest
Tennessee Forestry Association
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trees Forever
The Trust for Public Land
U.S. Industrial Pellet Association
Washington Forest Protection Association
Watershed Research & Training Center
The Westervelt Company
Weyerhaeuser
Wildlife Mississippi