

Rep. Doris Matsui Introduces the Energy Conservation through Trees Act

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Rep. Doris Matsui Introduces the Energy Conservation Through Trees Act

Will Promote Cleaner Air, Reduce Global Warming

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05) introduced the Energy Conservation Through Trees Act of 2008 to help lower utility bills and improve air quality. By promoting the strategic planting of trees, the amount of energy needed to heat and cool homes will be reduced.

"Today, we are tasked with reducing our dependence on foreign oil, stabilizing our energy grid, and improving air quality. By harnessing the enterprising spirit of Americans and utilizing a diverse range of innovative approaches, we can accomplish this goal," said Rep. Matsui.

Patterned after the successful model established by the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), the Energy Conservation Through Trees Act seeks to save Americans dramatic amounts of money on their utility bills and reduce outside temperatures in urban areas. The program conducted by SMUD has been proven to lower energy bills, make local power utilities more cost-effective, and reduce air pollution.

Planting shade trees around homes in a strategic manner is a proven way to lower energy demand in residential areas. According to research conducted by the Department of Energy, three shade trees strategically planted around a house can reduce home air-conditioning bills by about 30 percent in some cities, and a nationwide shade program could reduce air-conditioning use by at least 10 percent. Shade trees also help to:

- Improve public health and air quality by absorbing particulate matter;
- Store carbon dioxide to help slow global warming;
- Reduce the risk of flooding in urban areas by absorbing stormwater runoff;
- Improve private property values and increase residential aesthetics;
- Preserve public infrastructure, such as streets and sidewalks.

The legislation requires the use of science-based tree-siting guidelines to ensure that trees are not planted in locations that will disrupt pre-existing infrastructure, block solar panels and wind turbines, or damage power lines. Consultation during the development of these guidelines must be provided by Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) that are composed of local energy and arboricultural experts.

It also requires utilities that receive assistance to partner with nonprofit tree-planting organizations or other municipal infrastructure groups to run the technical side of the program. These nonprofit groups are meant to serve as tree-planting experts to complement utilities' financial interest in lowering peak energy demand and reducing consumption. They will provide technical and outreach assistance, work with tree recipients, and ensure that trees are planted in the right place to maximize energy conservation.

"In Sacramento, we are committed to solving the global warming crisis and reducing our impact on our planet. By expanding one of our successful local initiatives to the national level, we can help ensure that we are handing over a cleaner world to future generations," said Rep. Matsui.

"My legislation is a piece of the puzzle that will become the solution to our environmental challenges and securing our energy independence. We must take action now to make sure that our planet continues to thrive and flourish for years to come. Reducing our environmental impact will have far-reaching effects into the quality of life for the American people, and people around the world," said Rep. Matsui.

The Energy Conservation through Trees Act enjoys broad support:

"SMUD is an enthusiastic supporter of Congresswoman Matsui's Energy Conservation through Trees Act," said Larry Carr, president of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District's Board of Directors. "Together with the Sacramento Tree Foundation, SMUD has planted more than 430,000 free shade trees in the Sacramento area since 1990. Shade trees are a great way to reduce home cooling costs and beautify the environment."

- Larry Carr, President of the SMUD Board of Directors

"APPA commends Rep. Matsui for taking a leadership role in recognizing and incenting residential tree-planting as a viable method of energy conservation. For electric utilities across the country, planting the right tree in the right place can provide homes with shading or wind breaks, ultimately leading to reductions in energy usage and lower heating and cooling bills."

- Mark Crisson, CEO of the American Public Power Association

"I commend Congresswoman Matsui on her leadership in advocating that Congress replicate a successful Sacramento utility-nonprofit shade tree program throughout the nation. Over the past eighteen years, we have saved 16 megawatts of energy, which is enough power to cool 9,000 homes, because of our local shade tree program that lowers electric bills for working families and leads to less pollution in our environment. I call on Congress to pass this important piece of legislation so more Americans will be able to enjoy lower energy bills and a better quality of life."

- Ray Tretheway, Executive Director of the Sacramento Tree Foundation

"It is time we take the amazing energy benefits provided by trees seriously. With 20 years of extensive U.S. Forest Service behind the science, trees are one of the most cost effective means of lowering energy costs, cleaning our air and making our neighborhoods livable."

- Shannon Ramsay, President for the Alliance for Community Trees

"I commend Congresswoman Matsui's efforts to promote efficient and innovative methods of energy conservation. Bringing national focus to these proven initiatives will help raise public awareness of the positive results strategically-planted trees have on our energy consumption." - Marcia D. Bansley, Executive Director of Trees Atlanta

"Planting trees is one of those rare win-win situations - not only do trees reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but by shading buildings, they also reduce the demand for energy, which stops the gases from being emitted in the first place. Plus, you have the very real benefit of bringing the community together to plant these trees, connecting people to the environment and to each other."

-Martha Ozonoff, Executive Director, California ReLeaf

"This bill represents a win-win for consumers, electric utilities and local communities battling escalating electricity costs. We applaud Rep. Matsui for taking the lead on an innovative approach to confront this nationwide challenge."

- From Larry W. Frevert, President, American Public Works Association

"We feel that the bill is well-designed in focusing on energy conservation through targeted residential tree planting. It will provide direct energy cost-savings benefits to homeowners, improve local environments through the trees' shading and other ecosystem-service benefits, and reduce CO2 emissions through its energy savings, thus helping to mitigate climate change."

- Deborah Gangloff, Executive Director, American Forests

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- Shannon Ramsey, Founding President and CEO, Trees Forever

"ISA has long been an advocate regarding the environmental benefits of trees. Having legislation such as this in place is an important step toward maximizing the benefits of trees to improve the quality of life and our environment in cities everywhere."

- Jim Skiera, Executive Director, International Society of Arboriculture

"The funding and partnerships encouraged by this legislation will provide much needed opportunity for utility companies and arborists to work together in planting the right tree in the right

place."

-Derek Vannice, Executive Director, Utility Arborists Association

"We applaud Rep. Matsui's leadership for introducing this important legislation that uses tree planting techniques to reduce escalating energy usage, mitigate climate change and promote clean air. Landscape architects are at the forefront of sustainable design and have utilized tree canopy coverage to help reduce energy consumption and create healthy communities. ASLA fully supports the Energy Conservation Through Trees Act and looks forward to its passage."

- Nancy Somerville, Executive Vice President and CEO of the American Society of Landscape Architects

Utilizing Strategically Planted Trees to Conserve Energy is endorsed by:

National Arbor Day Foundation, Alliance for Community Trees, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, American Forests, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, International Society of Arborists, American Public Works Association, California Urban Forests Council, Urban Ecology Institute, California ReLeaf, American Society of Landscape Architects, Trees Atlanta, Friends of Trees, Utility Arborists Association, Sacramento Tree Foundation, Trees Forever, American Public Power Association, Pacific Gas and Electric

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