



AMERICAN WOOD COUNCIL

Support the Timber Innovation Act

There is strong bi-partisan support in Congress, as well national support from over 100 organizations including builders, architects, forest land owners, wood products manufacturers, state forestry associations, environmental groups, and labor unions, for passage of the Timber Innovation Act (TIA). The forestry and forest products industry in the U.S. provides, conservatively, over hundreds of thousands of jobs across the United States.

The merits of the legislation are many, including stimulating the economy and job growth; providing technical support for the building of environmentally friendly, sustainable buildings; encouraging innovation in the private sector and well as colleges and universities; and contributing to forest management.

Advancing the construction of tall wood buildings through research and development will help lower the cost of building construction and reduce reliance on fossil fuel-intensive materials. TIA also recognizes the potential environmental and economic benefits of increasing wood use in tall building applications and contributes to mill and labor jobs. Mills are large drivers of the rural economies, and expanded markets will help to bolster and grow these economies.

Encouraging the use of wood products also benefits the environment, as increased wood demand encourages landowners to continue planting trees instead of converting their land to other purposes. It will help keep families, who own and care for a large portion of U.S. forests and supply a majority of the timber we use, on the land and help them maintain their land in forest. In this respect, it is an incredibly powerful forest conservation strategy.

With the passage of the Timber Innovation Act, the United States has an opportunity to accelerate and lead in the adoption of tall wood buildings.

Despite the strong support for the Senate and House measures, some opposing material groups are arguing that these bills attempt to pick “winners and losers” with regard to federal support and funding. The coalition of groups supporting the legislation have many facts to counter that argument, most importantly, that these very industries have received millions of dollars (a conservative estimate) in federal funding over the last several decades.

Myth vs. Fact

MYTH: The Timber Innovation Act (TIA), H.R. 1380 and S. 538 in the 115th, authorizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to place mass timber, otherwise known as engineered, cross-laminated wood, as the material of choice for tall building structures exceeding 85 ft. or above.

FACT: The “Timber Innovation Act” does not mandate the use of specific products, or promote a “material of choice.” The legislation promotes research and technical assistance to state, local, university, and private sector education and architects to help familiarize them with the possibilities of building mass timber buildings, all of which will provide many benefits to the U.S. economy and environment. This bill simply provides direction on existing USFS programs and encourages further research and development.

MYTH: *TIA picks winners and losers at taxpayer’s expense.*

FACT: Congress has always supported research and development for many industries. The “Timber Innovation Act” does not mandate the use of specific products. The legislation promotes research and technical assistance to state, local, university and private sector education and architects to help familiarize them with the possibilities of building mass timber buildings, all of which will provide many benefits to the U.S. economy and environment. Most recognize that new structural systems in wood represent the first significant challenge to concrete and steel structures since their inception in tall building design more than a century ago. The introduction of these ideas is driven by the need to find safe, carbon-neutral and sustainable alternatives to incumbent structural materials of the urban world. The proposed solutions have the potential to revolutionize the building industry, address the major challenges of climate change, urbanization, and sustainable development and to significantly contribute to world housing needs.

Total Number of Concrete Industry Federal Grants Awarded: 232

Total Prime Recipient Transaction Amount: \$36,745,776 (from 2008 to 2016)

- National Science Foundation
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- Department of the Interior
- Department of Transportation
- Other Federal Agencies

Total Number of Steel Industry Federal Grants Awarded: 285

Total Prime Recipient Transaction Amount: \$72,587,411 (from 2008 to 2016)

- Department of Commerce
- Department of Defense
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of State
- Department of Transportation
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MYTH: *TIA Interferes with fair market competition.*

FACT: TIA does *not* mandate the use of particular products, which would be interfering with fair market competition. TIA authorizes the Tall Wood Building Prize Competition through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It creates federal grants to support state, local, university and private sector education, outreach, research and development, including education and assistance for architects and

builders. It also authorizes technical assistance for USDA, in cooperation with state foresters and state extension directors (or equivalent state officials), to implement a program of education and technical assistance for mass timber applications.

MYTH: TIA duplicates existing authority at USDA which oversees the Softwood Lumber Check-Off Program.

FACT: Commodity check-off programs, including the Softwood Lumber Board, are essentially marketing support programs. Under a check-off, funds are collected from the participating industry and are used to promote that particular commodity. No federal funds are used to support check-off programs.

While a check-off program empowers the industry which it supports to conduct research and promotion activities, it does NOT replace the abilities and resources of federal, state, or local governments to encourage and accelerate development of new globally-competitive products and industries. Further, the lumber check-off program CANNOT direct USDA and its state foresters and state extension directors (or equivalent state officials) to undertake programs that are already under its authority or to implement and provide programs of education and technical assistance for mass timber applications as called for in the legislation. There is an appropriate role the U.S. government plays in supporting research and development for all basic industries, and non-wood industries continue to receive significant federal funding for research and development.

This is an extremely misleading argument. Absolutely no federal funds go toward the wood products industry check-off program. A check-off program is funded solely by the participating industry and used for marketing, promotion and research activities for that particular commodity. In fact, the concrete industry has been seeking to establish its own check-off program (H.R. 985 and S. 1524).

MYTH: This is more than just an R&D bill. It also authorizes the USDA to promote, market, educate and train local and state officials along with engineers, architects and building designers to construct tall buildings 85 ft. and above with engineered wood at the taxpayer's expense.

FACT: The coalition of groups supporting the legislation have many arguments to counter that argument, most importantly, that these very industries have received millions of dollars (a conservative estimate) in federal funding over the last several decades.

The concrete and steel industries have received millions in federal funding (this is well documented) over the past several decades from various agencies, including the Department of Commerce (NIST); the National Science Foundation; the Department of Transportation and the Department of Homeland Security (to name a few). So, their assertion that government should not pick winners over losers is disingenuous at best, as their own industries have been the beneficiary of millions from the federal coffers. This bill, however, does not do that – it simply provides direction on existing USFS programs and encourages further research and development. Again:

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MYTH: The International Building Code (IBC) does NOT provide the building code for wood structures to be built above 85 ft. (or five to six stories depending on occupancy) due to the combustibility of the material. The IBC, and the membership of the International Code Council, should be permitted to continue their critical testing work to determine and provide the building code associated with tall wood building structures before Congress advances the TIA.

FACT: Model building codes developed by the International Code Council, who's voting members are building and fire officials from all over the country, have established extensive requirements for safe construction for ALL building materials. Such materials must meet those requirements of established building codes adopted by state or local jurisdictions. All buildings constructed to meet those codes can be expected to have similar performance in terms of safety. The ICC currently has a Tall Wood Ad-hoc Committee that is exploring possible code changes to allow tall wood buildings. Research and development is a parallel track with the adoption of building codes. The R&D activities supported by TIA could be presented to the Ad-hoc Committee in support of such changes.

Tall wood buildings have been constructed for decades in Europe and Canada, utilizing this evolving technology, under strict building codes. Having met local code requirements, a tall wood building (12 stories) is currently under construction in Portland, Oregon.

Mass timber products (which are used in tall wood buildings) better resist the effects of fire through charring of the outer layer, insulating the unburned wood at the core that maintains strength and giving occupants more time to leave the building. Mass timber structures also have minimal concealed spaces within floor and wall assemblies, which reduce the risk that a fire will spread unnoticed.

Structural materials like steel and concrete are still affected by fire and lose strength, which can eventually lead to failure when exposed to the temperatures of a building fire. One of wood's characteristics is that it can carry substantially greater maximum loads for short durations, as is the case during high wind and seismic events. Larger, heavy timber structures have stood in North America for the last 100 years.