

Why FRA Supports the Jobs in the Woods Act (H.R. 5344 & S.3063)

January 2024

House Sponsors: Congresswomen Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-OR-5) & Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA-3)

Senate Sponsors: Senators Angus King (I-ME), Jim Risch (R-ID), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)



Why the Jobs in the Woods Act Matters:

- The legislation is supported by 66 forestry associations across the U.S.
- Addresses the labor shortage impacting forestry and forestry-related industries.
- Provides grants to existing or establishing workforce and training programs.
- Provides workforce training opportunities to inspire the next generation of forestry workers.
- Prepares students for employment in the forest products industry or Forest Service.
- Targets workforce training for young adults in rural areas and creates career pathway opportunities in the forestry sector.
- Pathway programs allow for immediate job placement.
- Provides young adults a chance to establish a career in the communities where they were raised.

The forest products industry, including loggers and haulers, primary and secondary manufacturers, pulp and paper mills, paper packing plants, and paper facilities, is one of the largest manufacturing sectors in the U.S., sustaining nearly 926,000 families and contributing \$353 billion annually to the U.S. economy. Mill labor shortages are limiting modernization and growth investments in existing and new manufacturing facilities, and the labor pool in the logging sector is aging rapidly. Less than 25% of logging business owners are under 40, 55 is the average age of owner/operators, and approximately 30% of owner/operators are planning to leave the business within five years.

Targeted workforce education and training programs have been effective recruitment tools in computer programming, utility vegetation management, and automotive industries. Regional forest industry training hubs would allow participants to stay in or near their communities, which reduces the cost to participate and affords program developers increased flexibility in adapting training curricula to meet regional needs through ties to local forest product employers. The forestry sector industry struggles to find a trained and skilled workforce at all levels, as an estimated 40-60 percent of young adults are leaving rural forest-based economies for employment opportunities.

The Jobs in the Woods Act, introduced by Congresswomen Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-OR-5) and Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA-3), would create a grant program for nonprofit organizations, state governments, and colleges to utilize workforce training in forestry-related fields – helping prepare students for jobs in the U.S. Forest Service and the timber industry. Companion bipartisan legislation (S.3063) was introduced by Senators Angus King (I-ME) and Jim Risch (R-ID), co-chairs of the Senate Working Forest Caucus. The Senators were joined by cosponsors Senators Mike Crapo (R-ID), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH).

The legislation would:

- Create education programs by states, nonprofits, and colleges through grants of \$500,000-\$2,000,000.
- Create programs in rural and low-income areas to spur economic development, bringing thousands of dollars of investments into our rural and underserved communities.
- Create a pool of talented, trained, and qualified applicants to fill timber industry job openings, helping Americans obtain quality jobs to serve and responsibly manage our forest and secure our wood industry supply chain.
- Partner with programs that have proven to help students achieve forestry industry jobs and programs that engage with their local communities.

Request:

Cosponsor the Jobs in the Woods Act (H.R. 5344) (S.3063)

The Forest Resources Association (FRA) represents the interests of over 330 organizations and businesses in the forest products industry. Our members include forest landowners, suppliers, consuming mills, associated businesses, and state forestry associations. FRA promotes the interests of its members in the economic, efficient, and sustainable use of forest resources to meet the needs of the wood fiber supply chain through private enterprise. FRA members are represented in 49 states and 384 congressional districts.

For more information, please contact:

- Tim O'Hara, FRA Interim President, 218-390-7965 or tohara@forestresources.org

