

Community Wood Energy Innovation Act

The Community Wood Energy Innovation Act will promote energy security, support rural economies and help keep private forests intact at a time when landowners are under constant pressure to develop their forestlands. Specifically, this bill encourages investments in advanced wood energy and combined heat and power (CHP) systems while also supporting markets for low value, low quality wood.

Finding uses for low value wood is a growing concern for forest owners and wood processing facilities. For landowners, who often need to remove low value biomass from their woods keep it healthy and tackle issues like wildfires or insect infestation, finding a market for this low value material is increasingly challenging. Additionally, the consolidation of the U.S. forest product industry has placed substantial strain of facilities like lumber mills who typically sold their low-grade wood or processing byproducts to another wood using facility like a pulp mill.

At the same time, rural communities face increasingly greater energy challenges, such as the high cost associated with heating oil and the lack of access to natural gas infrastructure. In 2008, Congress created the Community Wood Energy Program (CWEP) to assist state and local governments with the capital costs of installing high-efficiency, biomass-fueled energy systems.

The Community Wood Energy Innovation Act expands the CWEP to better support investments in energy systems and facilities that use low value wood, thereby reducing our dependence on foreign oil, offsetting the costs of forests management and creating jobs in rural forest-dependent communities.

What the Community Wood Energy Innovation Act Will Do:

- Reauthorize the CWEP and provide \$25 million in discretionary funds to support new initiatives
- Support capital investments for advanced wood energy and CHP systems in public and private facilities
- Support other uses of low value, low quality wood with a preference for projects that use forest management byproducts and byproducts of wood products manufacturing
- Prioritize projects in areas that need markets for low value, low quality wood or have limited access to other fuel sources

