

March 15, 2010

The Honorable Nydia Velazquez
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Lucas
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jose Serrano
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jo Ann Emerson
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Velazquez, Ranking Member Graves, Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Lucas, Chairman Serrano and Ranking Member Emerson:

We the undersigned, representing the U.S. green industry, are pleased to endorse House Small Business Subcommittee on Finance and Tax Chairman Kurt Schrader's introduction of H.R. 4509, the "Small Business Environmental Stewardship Assistance Act." In 1991, Public Law 101-515 created "The National Small Business Tree Planting Program" (U.S.C. 15, Chapter 14A, § 651) as one of a number of policy tools to spur "rapid increases in employment opportunities in local communities." The program was designed to bolster local economies by making public sector nursery and landscaping work available to firms that were hit hard by the recession of the early 1990s.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) provided grants through state forestry agencies to contract with local nurseries, arborists and landscape professionals to plant trees around retail storefronts, rental housing complexes, along Main Street and throughout community parks. The program was a valuable tool for small businesses, who worked collaboratively with state and local governments on an installation and three year maintenance plan for each project. H.R. 4509 would reauthorize this successful program, while allowing for the resources necessary to ensure proper program administration and oversight.

From 1991-94, the program employed more than 18,000 green industry businesses with fewer than 100 employees to install over 23 million trees. Federal dollars were carefully leveraged with non-federal sources to improve the urban and community tree resources of many of the nation's towns and cities. As one example, the Oregon Department of Forestry administered 109 SBA tree planting grants in Oregon communities from 1991 to 1994. Nearly 11,700 shade, landscape, and riparian area trees were planted. The total federal investment in these projects was \$894,318. This was matched by \$1,541,273 in local expenditures, for a total economic impact of \$2,442,591.

As Congress addresses national priorities like climate change, energy independence and small business job creation, the U.S. green industry strongly recommends a policy solution that can help to achieve these ambitious goals: immediate consideration and passage of H.R. 4509. The Small Business Environmental Stewardship Assistance Act will leverage a modest federal investment in trees to provide a low-cost, natural solution to meet environmental and green development objectives. H.R. 4509 will create and sustain private sector job opportunities, while generating energy cost savings and enhancing retail and commercial areas where America's small businesses operate.

Investments in green infrastructure, such as those found in H.R. 4509, will yield visible and high returns in the form of employment, economic and social benefits, and will increase in monetary and environmental value over time. The U.S. green industry looks forward to working with you in securing passage of H.R. 4509, and for the appropriate funding necessary to ensure the program's success.

Sincerely,

National and Regional Organizations

American Nursery & Landscape Association
American Society of Landscape Architects
Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
Irrigation Association
Mid American Green Industry Council
National Association of Pond Professionals
New England Nursery Association
OFA – An Association of Horticulture Professionals
Outdoor Power Equipment Institute
Perennial Plant Association
PLANET - Professional Landcare Network
Society of American Florists
Tree Care Industry Association

Independent State Organizations

Alabama Nursery & Landscape Association
Arizona Landscape Contractors Association
Arizona Nursery Association
Arkansas Green Industry Association
Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado
California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers
Colorado Nursery & Greenhouse Association (CNGA)

- The New Mexico Chapter of CNGA
- The Wyoming Chapter of CNGA

Connecticut Nursery & Landscape Association
Delaware Nursery & Landscape Association
Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association
Georgia Green Industry Association
Idaho Nursery & Landscape Association
Illinois Green Industry Association
Illinois Landscape Contractors Association
Indiana Nursery & Landscape Association
Iowa Nursery & Landscape Association
Kansas Nursery & Landscape Association
Kentucky Nursery & Landscape Association
Louisiana Irrigation Association
Louisiana Nursery & Landscape Association
Maine Landscape & Nursery Association
Maryland Green Industry Council

Maryland Nursery & Landscape Association
Massachusetts Association of Landscape Professionals
Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape Association
Michigan Green Industry Association
Michigan Nursery & Landscape Association
Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association
Missouri Nursery & Landscape Association
Montana Nursery & Landscape Association
Nebraska Nursery & Landscape Association
Nevada Landscape Association
New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association
New Jersey Nursery & Landscape Association
New York Nursery & Landscape Association
North Carolina Green Industry Council
North Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association
North Dakota Nursery & Greenhouse Association
Ohio Nursery & Landscape Association
Ohio Landscape Association
Oklahoma Nursery & Landscape Association
Oregon Association of Nurseries
Oregon Landscape Contractors Association
Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association
Rhode Island Nursery & Landscape Association
South Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association
South Dakota Nursery & Landscape Association
Tennessee Nursery & Landscape Association
Texas Nursery & Landscape Association
Utah Nursery & Landscape Association
Virginia Green Industry Council
Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association
Washington State Nursery & Landscape Association
West Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association
Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association
Wisconsin Nursery Association
Wisconsin Green Industry Federation

Cc: House Committee on Small Business
House Committee on Agriculture
House Subcommittee on Financial Services Appropriations

According to a 2005 survey, the vertically-integrated green industry in the United States has an estimated economic impact of \$147.8 billion. In addition, the U.S. green industry employs 1.95 million individuals, generates \$64.3 billion in labor income, and provides \$6.9 billion in indirect business taxes. According to the USDA's 2007 Census of Agriculture, nursery, greenhouse and floriculture crop sales totaled \$16.6 billion in 2007. Nursery and greenhouse crop production now ranks among the top five agricultural commodities in 28 states, and among the top 10 in all 50 states.