



April 27, 2017

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop:

I write in support of H.R. 1873, the Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act, introduced by Representatives Doug LaMalfa and Kurt Schrader. This legislation is important to America's electric cooperatives to ensure grid reliability and improve delivery of safe and affordable electricity across our service area.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association is the national service organization that represents the nation's more than 900 private, not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provide service to 42 million people in 47 states. Essential to our ability to provide safe, affordable, and reliable power to our member-owners is the ability to access and properly manage our infrastructure.

H.R. 1873 includes provisions that would improve our access to critical electric infrastructure located on federal lands. Specifically, the bill would give electric utilities more consistent procedures and a streamlined process in order to better manage utility rights of way. The bill allows sensible procedures that would reduce bureaucratic red tape and reduce delays that currently impede our ability to adequately manage dangerous vegetative overgrowth in existing utility rights of way located on federal lands. Such delays not only add to the costs our electric consumers pay for their electricity, but present a major threat to human safety, wildlife habitat, and the reliable delivery of electricity.

In summary, the LaMalfa-Schrader bill will be a useful tool for improving management and maintenance of critical electric infrastructure that crosses federal lands. This common-sense bill has the potential to reduce devastating wildfires while improving electric reliability for millions of Americans. We urge passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Jim Matheson
Chief Executive Officer
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association