



January 21, 2010

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

The Honorable Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Velazquez, Chairwoman Landrieu, Chairman Serrano and Chairman Durbin:

The 101st Congress convened at a time when the United States was experiencing a widespread economic downturn. The 1990-91 recession left employment declines greater than any period in the previous five decades. In response, Congress authorized the National Small Business Tree Planting Program as one of a number of policy tools to spur “rapid increases in employment opportunities in local communities” (P.L. 101-515). The program was designed to bolster local economies and beautify communities by making public sector nursery and landscaping work available to firms hard-hit by the recession.

The program was authorized for several years in the 1990s and was administered by the Small Business Administration (SBA). The SBA provided grants to state forestry agencies to contract with local nurseries, arborists and landscapers to plant trees around retail storefronts, rental housing complexes and community parks. The program leveraged federal dollars with non-federal sources to improve the urban and community tree resources of many of the nation's towns and cities. More than 18,000 small landscaping firms were employed to plant over 23 million trees across the country as a result of the program. These trees have encouraged consumers to spend more time and money in retail and business locations, decreased heating and cooling costs and improved the overall livability of communities.

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) actively works to promote community tree planting, public-private partnerships, and volunteer tree planting efforts that help stimulate local economies, create jobs, and mobilize community spirit. As the primary cooperater in delivering the SBA tree planting program during its existence in the 1990s, State Foresters strongly recommend that Congress reauthorize and reinvest in the program by appropriating \$30 million during FY2011 to FY2016. The SBA program can help provide green-collar jobs, reduce energy demand, and clean the air of harmful pollutants. We recommend the following improvements be included as part of reauthorizing the program:

- **Utilize state-approved, pass-through local contracts.** Grant funds should be directed through state forestry agencies to efficiently and consistently award contracts to communities, small businesses and non-profits.

Executive Director
Jay Farrell

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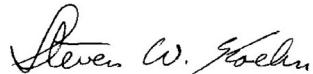
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- **Provide for program administration.** State Foresters stand ready to help deliver the SBA program to urban and community areas provided fair and equitable funding is authorized and available for program administration.
- **Reward communities actively managing their urban forests.** Every community has tree planting needs, but not all communities have made a commitment to actively manage their urban forests. Preference should be given to those communities who have a plan for proper tree selection, placement, installation and maintenance.

Today, the 111th Congress finds itself exploring ways to find jobs for approximately 10 percent of Americans left unemployed during the current economic downturn. NASF strongly encourages you to follow the lead of your predecessors by including the SBA program as part of a national strategy towards a full economic recovery. We look forward to working with you as you consider reauthorizing and reinvesting in the program.

Sincerely,



Steven W. Koehn
NASF President

Cc: House Small Business Committee
House Subcommittee on Financial Services Appropriations
Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship
Senate Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government Appropriations