



**INTERNATIONAL  
BROTHERHOOD  
OF ELECTRICAL  
WORKERS®**

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**LONNIE R. STEPHENSON**  
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June 13, 2017

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Chairman  
House Committee of Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
Ranking Member  
House Committee of Natural Resources  
1329 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

On behalf of the approximately 750,000 active members and retirees of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), I urge you to support the *Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act of 2017 (H.R. 1873)*, legislation to improve the reliability of the electric grid and reduce the threat of wildfires from transmission and distribution facilities located on federal lands by expediting the process of vegetation management.

Vegetation management – more commonly known as tree trimming – on and around power lines has been widely recognized as an important tool for ensuring grid reliability. Keeping the approximately 71,613 miles of electric transmission and distribution lines located on federal lands clear of overgrown vegetation is the responsibility of electric utility companies and their ratepayers. However, in order to gain access to maintain their rights-of-way (ROW), utility companies must first get approval from federal agencies. Some electricity providers who employ IBEW members have expressed frustration with federal land managers who enforce access policies that are contradictory. They are also critical of a decision-making process for removing hazardous trees that is not completed in a timely manner. Finally, they assert there is unnecessary redundancy in reviews and working requirements that add needless delays.

The *Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act of 2017 (H.R. 1873)* would help address these problems by creating a streamlined process with more consistent procedures thus allowing utilities to better manage their ROWs on federal lands. The proposed legislation allows sensible procedures to cut-through bureaucratic red tape in order to reduce delays that currently impede the ability of utilities to manage overgrowth in and around electric transmission and distribution lines. Such delays add costs and present a hazard to human safety, wildlife habitat, and the reliable delivery of electricity.

The *Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act of 2017 (H.R. 1873)*, introduced by Representatives Doug LaMalfa (R-CA) and Kurt Schrader (D-OR), is common-sense bi-partisan legislation that will help electric utilities “keep the lights on.” I respectfully urge you to support this worthwhile legislation.

Sincerely yours,

Lonnie R. Stephenson  
International President

LRS:lgd

Copy to Rep. Doug Lamborn, Chairman, Subcommittee on Water, Power, and Oceans  
Rep. Jared Huffman, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Water, Power, and Oceans  
Rep. Tom McClintock, Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
Rep. Colleen Hanabusa, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Federal Lands