

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 10, 2004

The President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing in support of Governor Jennifer Granholm's recent request for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance in addressing the damage caused by the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in our home state of Michigan.

First discovered in the United States only 2 years ago, this invasive pest has already killed over seven million trees in Southeast Michigan. Currently, local, state and federal officials are cooperating in an effort to contain and hopefully eradicate EAB before it spreads throughout a larger portion of our nation. If our nation's ash trees are to be saved, it is imperative that decisive action is taken now to assist those areas where the EAB has already destroyed the ash tree population. In addition, it is imperative that federal funds be provided to assist with these efforts.

The presence of dying trees also poses a considerable public safety risk, particularly in the six counties that have undergone the most damage due to the EAB. This "core zone" contains millions of brittle dead trees that would cause significant damage to buildings, powerlines, and individuals if the trees were to collapse or catch fire. It is vital to our public and economic security that these dead trees be removed before they cause further damage.


The August 2003 Blackout and the California wildfires are illustrative of the problems that can occur when trees, at the urban-forest interface, are not carefully managed. The U.S.-Canada Power System Outage Task Force Final Report on the August 14th Blackout in the United States and Canada noted that at the outset of this blackout transmission lines began "tripping out because the lines were contacting overgrown trees within the lines right of ways." The report also noted that "inadequate tree trimming" caused by FirstEnergy's failure to "maintain equipment ratings through a vegetation management program" and the NERC's failure to define such a requirement played a role in this blackout.

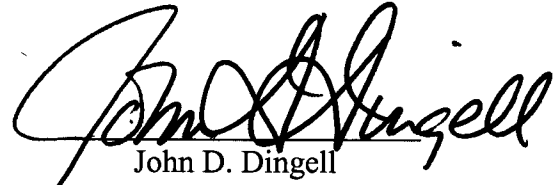
Removing dead trees before they can damage powerlines, serve as fuel for fires, threaten human safety or damage homes is the best way to manage a potential emergency. We appreciate your attention to this matter, and your prompt response.


Sincerely,

  
Debbie Stabenow

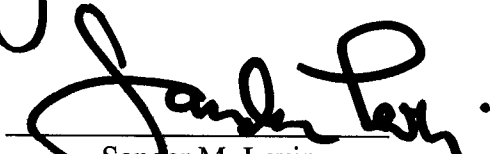
  
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