

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Oppose Forest Biomass Carbon Rider, Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Appropriations Bill (S. 2580, Sec 427)

October 30, 2019

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader
McCarthy,

On behalf of our millions of members, we strongly oppose the inclusion of any anti-environment riders in the FY 2020 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. Including damaging legislative provisions in a must-pass funding bill harms our public health and environment, and it undermines the democratic process. While we were initially encouraged that Senate appropriators agreed to not include new harmful riders in their bills, several ‘legacy’ riders, inappropriately included in previous years funding bills, continue to exist in the base text. Beyond continuing policies that are harmful to the environment and public health, these provisions also undermine the spirit of the agreement on riders. We ask that in any final appropriations bills they be removed, as they have been in the House bills.

We have specific concerns with language contained within Sec. 427 of S. 2580 to legislate the science of biomass and climate change. This provision has wrongly been interpreted by EPA to declare as a matter of law that all forest bioenergy from managed forests is categorically “carbon neutral.” This would likely result in increasing emissions, rewarding poor forest management and undermining current and future emissions permits and regulations.

Any effort to broadly characterize forest biomass energy as “carbon neutral” is scientifically indefensible and incorporating this characterization into government policy will have large, damaging impacts on the climate. EPA’s own Scientific Advisory Board has rejected the notion that forest biomass energy is carbon neutral. Its final report finds “not all biogenic emissions are carbon neutral nor net additional to the atmosphere, and assuming so is inconsistent with the underlying science,” underscoring that different biomass feedstocks have varying carbon impacts. Moreover, multiple credible and deliberative scientific bodies have rejected the notion that biomass energy is categorically carbon neutral demonstrating that in many cases, using forest biomass for energy can have significant climate impacts.¹

¹ European Academies’ Science Advisory Council, *Commentary by the European Academies’ Science Advisory Council on Forest Bioenergy and Carbon Neutrality*, (June 2018)
https://easac.eu/fileadmin/PDF_s/reports_statements/Carbon_Neutrality/EASAC_commentary_on_Carbon_Neutrality

Congress's efforts to legislate carbon neutrality appear to have emboldened the EPA to further advance the Trump administration's anti-climate, and anti-science policies. In its May 2018 *Statement of Agency Policy* issued by then-Administrator Pruitt, the EPA proposes treating all forest biomass from managed forests as carbon neutral, which directly contradicts the outcome of the EPA's own science-based process intended to determine *the extent of* any carbon benefits.

When drafting its bill (H.R. 3052), the House understood the confusion and potential damage this provision creates and opted to leave it, as well as other harmful riders out of the bill. As negotiations continue on FY20 appropriations, we urge you to follow their example by rejecting all anti-environment riders in the final negotiated package and in particular the damaging biomass provision found in Section 427.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Biofuelwatch
Center for Biological Diversity
Clean Air Task Force
Dogwood Alliance
Earthjustice
EDF Action
John Muir Project
League of Conservation Voters
Mighty Earth
Natural Resources Defense Council
Partnership for Policy Integrity
Pivot Point
Rachel Carson Council
Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center
Union of Concerned Scientists

CC: The Honorable Richard Shelby
CC: The Honorable Patrick Leahy
CC: The Honorable Nita Lowey
CC: The Honorable Kay Granger
CC: The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
CC: The Honorable Tom Udall
CC: The Honorable Betty McCollum
CC: The Honorable David Joyce

[_15_June_2018.pdf](#).

Letter from sixty-five scientists to the U.S. Senate opposing the notion that all biomass is carbon neutral, (February 2016) <http://whrc.org/letter-to-the-senate-on-carbon-neutrality/>