

THE RESIDENTIAL ENERGY AND ECONOMIC SAVINGS (TREES) ACT

SPONSORED BY REPS. DORIS MATSUI (D-CA), JOHN SARBANES (D-MD), & JEFF FORTENBERRY (R-NE)

The Residential Energy and Economic Savings (TREES) Act establishes a grant program to assist electric utilities with energy conservation programs that use targeted tree planting to reduce residential energy demand. The purpose of the legislation is to help homeowners lower their electric bills (and help utilities lower their peak load demand) by reducing residential energy usage. Trees not only help mitigate the urban heat island effect, but also shield homes from sun in the summer and cold winds in the winter.

Bill details:

- Awards grants to utilities that partner with tree-planting organizations to provide free or discounted shade-providing or wind-reducing trees to residential consumers
- Uses best available science for tree-siting guidelines for optimum placement to ensure long-term tree survival
- Provides recipients with planting, care assistance, and instruction
- Ensures engagement and collaboration with community members and industry experts
- Supports workforce development initiatives as part of the tree-planting program
- Creates the “Arbor City of America” award to recognize cities that are making strides to increase canopy cover and reduce energy costs for residents. Arbor Cities receive \$250,000 to go towards future efforts to increase green space and green infrastructure.

BENEFIT OF TREES

Strategically planting shade trees around homes is a proven way to lower energy demand in residential areas. According to research conducted by the Department of Energy, three shade trees strategically planted around a house can reduce home air conditioning bills up to 40 percent in some cities, and a nationwide shade program could reduce air-conditioning use by at least 10 percent. Shade trees also help to:

- Improve public health and air quality by absorbing particulate matter
- Store carbon dioxide, and subsequently prevent further warming of our planet
- Reduce the risk of flooding in urban areas by absorbing stormwater runoff
- Improve private property values and increase residential aesthetics

SUPPORTERS

The bill is supported by the following organizations:

- American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)
- Arbor Day Foundation
- Baltimore Tree Trust
- California ReLEAF
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Chesapeake Conservancy
- Clean Air Task Force
- National Association of State Foresters
- National League of Cities
- NRDC
- Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)
- Sacramento Tree Foundation
- Smart Growth America