

ENERGY CONSERVATION THROUGH TREES ACT
(Extension of Remarks)

Honorable Doris O. Matsui of California
April 22, 2008

Ms. Matsui: Madam Speaker, today I am proud to introduce the *Energy Conservation through Trees Act*. On this Earth Day in 2008, my legislation builds on an innovative program developed in my hometown of Sacramento that will help Americans lower their energy bills while increasing energy conservation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Through the targeted and strategic planting of specific species of shade trees around residences, homeowners and utilities can conserve significant amounts of energy.

Planting shade trees in strategic locations is a proven method to help homeowners manage the amount of electricity they need to run their air conditioners and heaters. For more than a decade, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District has partnered with the Sacramento Tree Foundation to offer their customers free shade trees to help reduce energy consumption.

This program has succeeded in planting more than 400,000 trees, which will help conserve enough energy to cool 9,000 homes in Sacramento. In addition, these trees will contribute to the fight against global warming by absorbing an estimated two billion pounds of carbon dioxide. They will absorb five billion gallons of rainwater as well, and will eliminate or avoid the production of about 61 million pounds of air pollutants. Most important, they will save my constituents millions of dollars in energy costs, and will relieve SMUD from having to purchase expensive and dirty power during periods when demand is at its peak.

Madam Speaker, the benefits of strategically planted trees to the environment, to energy conservation, and even to public health are many, and the Federal government certainly has a role to play in helping to encourage more utilities to utilize them. With this in mind, the *Energy Conservation through Trees Act* creates a grant program at the Department of Energy to help residential power providers institute targeted tree-planting initiatives dedicated to reducing residential energy consumption.

In order to qualify for financial assistance under this legislation, utilities must partner with local tree-planting organizations to serve as experts in the siting, planting, and care of the shade trees provided to homeowners. These tree-planting organizations must employ science-based guidelines to ensure that planted trees do not interfere with pre-existing solar panels, wind turbines, septic systems, building foundations, and other essential infrastructure. These guidelines are also meant to ensure that ecologically appropriate trees are distributed to homeowners.

Madam Speaker, the American people are concerned about our Nation's energy policy. They want us to take action to combat global warming. They are demanding relief from energy bills that continually rise year after year. Utilizing strategic planting of trees to increase energy conservation is a proven and reliable way for Congress to take action to address these concerns.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the *Energy Conservation through Trees Act*. Doing so will send a strong signal to our constituents that we are taking steps today to create a more affordable and energy-conscious future for them.

DORIS O. MATSUI
Member of Congress