

**American Forest Foundation**  
**American Nursery & Landscape Association**  
**Cornell University, Department of Natural Resources**  
**The Davey Institute**  
**Greenspace-the Cambria Land Trust**  
**International Maple Syrup Institute**  
**Massachusetts Association of Campground Owners**  
**National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils**  
**The Nature Conservancy**  
**North American Maple Syrup Council, Inc.**  
**Oregon Invasive Species Council**  
**Society of American Florists**  
**Society of Municipal Arborists**  
**University of Maryland, Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture**  
**Virginia Native Plant Society**

January 3, 2012

The Honorable Daniel Akaka  
United States Senate  
141 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Akaka and Feinstein:

We are writing to endorse S. 1673, the Safeguarding American Agriculture Act of 2011.

S. 1673 would establish the Office of Agriculture Inspection within the Department of Homeland Security, which would be headed by the Assistant Commissioner for Agriculture Inspection. The bill would further establish a career path for agricultural inspectors within the Department, and institute supportive recruiting and training programs. Finally, the bill would require a report to the Congress regarding progress in implementing the action plans developed by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)/DHS Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Joint Task Force on Improved Agriculture Inspection. These actions are intended to strengthen the mission of CBP Agriculture

Specialists in safeguarding our nation's natural and agricultural resources from invasive non-native pests and disease.

Our organizations are working together to reduce the introduction and spread of non-native pests and diseases that threaten trees native to our country. We note that as recently as 2009, USDA APHIS documented the establishment of 58 new or re-introduced plant pests – a rate of more than one new pest per week. Many of these pests cause enormous damage: according a recent study by Juliann Aukema and others, one subset of these introduced pests, those that kill trees, cost local governments and homeowners more than \$3 billion each year. Clearly, improvements are needed in programs that are intended to prevent additional introductions.

Many of these plant pests enter with general cargo, especially in wooden crates and pallets, or as egg masses attached to ship superstructures. Preventing introductions via these pathways falls under the jurisdiction of CBP Agriculture Specialists. It is therefore vitally important that the CBP-APHIS relationship work smoothly, that the agriculture mission receive appropriate priority, and that CBP employ highly skilled and motivated Agriculture Specialists.

We look forward to working with you to bring about adoption of S. 1673 and to explore other steps that the Congress could take to reduce the rate at which damaging pests and plant pathogens are being introduced to the United States. If you have any questions about our comments or wish to speak to us directly, please contact Faith Campbell at 703-841-4881 or [fcampbell@tnc.org](mailto:fcampbell@tnc.org).

Yours,

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