

Op-Ed for The Hill, Oct 24, 2007.

Submitted by Alexander von Bismarck of the *Environmental Investigation Agency*, on behalf of the *American Forest & Paper Association*, the *Hardwood Federation*, and the *International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers*

Illegal logging is one of the greatest environmental challenges facing the globe. It causes international and civil conflict, carbon emissions, species extinction, and the loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs and business for any company trying to follow the law.

The role of international trade in driving illegal logging has been recognized by everyone from the World Bank and the United Nations, to President Bush's own Initiative Against Illegal Logging. In 2005, in recognition of the impact their markets have on the crisis of illegal logging, the G-8 nations, including the U.S., pledged to "act in our own countries...to halt the import and marketing of illegally logged timber."

The consequences of illegal logging have united the largest forest products industry associations, every major environmental group, and many organized labor organizations behind the current legislative effort in Congress. This unity was on display at a recent hearing in the Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans Subcommittee in the House Committee on Natural Resources on October 16. The bills, introduced by Senators Wyden and Alexander (S. 1930), and Congressmen Blumenauer, Weller, and Wexler (H.R. 1497), are aimed at decreasing the importation of illegally-sourced wood and wood products.

Family forest products businesses in the U.S., which overwhelmingly act in accordance with all laws and regulations, are struggling to stay competitive with low cost illegal timber and wood products in the global marketplace. The value of U.S. wood exports could increase by over \$460 million annually were there no illegally harvested wood in the global market. These bills will level a playing field currently stacked against law-abiding companies, encourage healthy competition, and improve the competitiveness of timber trade in the U.S. and abroad. Furthermore, they would assist in combating the theft of countries' natural resources which is often a result of illegal logging practices.

These bills take a market-friendly approach to a serious problem, setting a clear and reasonable standard – no illegal wood – and allow businesses total flexibility in how they achieve this. They will allow for the prosecution of the worst-of-the-worst offenders and leave credible industry better off.

As members of a broad coalition of organizations representing importers and producers of timber and forest products, as well as major labor and environmental groups, we strongly urge passage of this legislation. By leveling the playing field and rewarding trustworthy importers with higher market share, this legislation will, for the first time, reward importers that employ good practices. Importers making any effort to avoid illegally harvested timber, as well as those concerned with the negative consequences of illegal logging, should whole-heartedly support these bills.

AF&PA is the national trade association of the forest, paper, and wood products industry. The Hardwood Federation is the largest forest products industry association in the U.S., representing over 14,000 businesses and one million hardwood families. EIA is an international campaigning organization committed to investigating and exposing environmental crime. IAM is one of the nation's largest trade unions, representing more than 720,000 active and retired members.