

# If The President Calls Do You Hang Up?

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Good morning

Let me first thank all of you for your long years of unwavering support for the Evergreen Foundation. I hope that in our time together this morning you will see that your hard earned dollars are in capable hands.

When Rikki asked me if I would speak to you this morning she said, “I hope you can bring us a hopeful message.”

As it happens, I can.

There is hope.

And hope has a name.

And his name is George W. Bush

*President* George W. Bush

And it is *his* presidency that brings me here this morning – to explain *why* there is reason for hope – and to ask a question only you can answer: If the President calls, do you hang up or do you answer the call?”

Before we get to Hope I want to say a few things about this ordinary, extraordinary man.

I believe with every ounce of my being that Divine Province put George W. Bush in the White House. In my wildest imaginings I cannot fathom where the world would be today if Mr. Gore had been elected.

I like what the *Wall Street Journal* had to say about the President in an editorial it published after last month’s State of the Union speech

“In his first two years in office,” the *Journal* wrote, “Mr. Bush has confounded both Washington and his media-Democratic critics, not just because he is not as dumb as they thought he was, but also because he views the White House as more than a nice place to live. He means to accomplish big things, he is risking his capital to persuade the country to support him, and his fellow Republicans in particular should understand that if he and his agenda fail, so will they.”

The Liberal Establishment dislikes Mr. Bush for many reasons, but nothing about him riles them more than the fact that his *first* term in office looks a lot like Ronald Reagan’s *third* term. And, indeed, there are some similarities – moral clarity being the biggest one.

Mr. Reagan's Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger described his President's mettle in a review of Peter Schweizer's book: "Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty Year Struggle and Final Triumph over Communism."

"The monumental achievement of Reagan's lonely, lifelong struggle against communism was his final victory in the Cold War," Mr. Weinberger wrote. "And make no mistake: it *was* Reagan's victory. Schweizer's summation tells all: "Those virtues that Reagan so admired – courage and character – are what the nearly half-century battle against communism most required of him. Sometimes his strong views brought physical threats against his life and family. More often they would prompt ridicule and denunciation of him as a dangerous ignoramus. In either case, Reagan unflinchingly pressed on, opposed by old friends, cabinet officers, and sometimes, even members of his own family."

Of his achievement Mr. Reagan later said, "We must not be guided by fear, but by courage and moral clarity."

I think *this* quality – this moral compass seemingly imbedded in his soul – is what Americans admired most in President Reagan, and now admire in President Bush. Count me among them.

The Left has occupied the moral high ground in America for a long time. But this is changing. Witness the stunning rise of Fox News. "We report, you decide." A declaration that folks in the Heartland don't need liberal elitists to tell them what is best for the country.

The Liberal clergy has also exerted its moral authority over America for a long time. But this, *too*, is changing. Politically conservative denominations are enjoying unprecedented membership growth, while membership in liberal denominations is declining. Their latest national outrage - the campaign to convince you that Jesus Christ would not have driven an SUV – is in my view a sign of their increasing desperation.

Academia, another Leftist stronghold, is also bending under pressure from alternative scholarship: The Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institution and the Cato Institute.

The Iraqi situation has momentarily re-energized the Left, but the *fact* that Mr. Bush's personal popularity remains very high suggests that the same moral compass that

guides him guides most Americans. We may argue the fine points among themselves, but on the larger questions: national defense, government intrusion in private lives, individual responsibility, taxes, poverty and America's role on the global stage, we like what this President says and trust him to represent our interests.

This isn't to say that a misstep could not cost him his Presidency. I think he is keenly, even painfully aware that his father's decision to break his "No new taxes" pledge cost him a second term.

Other presidents have also been sharply rebuked when they confused their own popularity with the public's inner sensibilities. FDR lost so much credibility following his 1936 attempt to pack the Supreme Court that he had great difficulty convincing Congress and the American people to intervene in World War II. Public opinion did not turn his direction again until the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

I share the *Wall Street Journal* view that what has thus far buoyed Bush The Son across politically stormy seas has been his willingness to spend some of his own political capital on controversial issues that clearly matter to many, many Americans. One such issue – *the issue that brings me here today* - is the very divisive public debate over what to do about the West's wildfire crisis.

When the President made his decision to fly to Medford last August to visit with firefighters and – more importantly – unveil his Healthy Forests Initiative he did so against the recommendations of advisors who counseled that the wildfire debate held too many political risks. And when it became clear his mind was made up someone asked why he was taking the risk. "Because," he answered, "it is the right thing to do."

Last September I was invited to a meeting in Washington, D.C. to discuss ways in which we – as *Evergreen Magazine* - might join in an effort to raise public awareness of the need to quickly address the ecological crisis that has pushed the West's desperately ill federal forests to the brink of ecological collapse.

We have been at the forefront in the wildfire debate since it started. And there is no doubt in my mind that we have done much to help advance public and congressional understanding of both the problem and the solution to this crisis. But having watched Bill Clinton reduce the 1993 Timber Summit to a story about him I have to tell you that I

experienced a twinge of cynicism when President Bush went to Medford. It was that *same old* sinking feeling that comes with knowing that politics would probably again trump science and history, that the West's rural timber communities would again suffer the indignity of feigned concern for the human tragedy that befell them after the northern spotted owl was listed as a threatened species.

So I asked a man who is close to the President if he thought he was serious about what he said in Medford.

I'll not soon forget his answer to my question.

He said, and I quote, "The President is personally and morally committed to this issue. No matter what happens, this White House will not jerk the rug out from under those who are trying to help the President advance his Healthy Forests Initiative."

Moral clarity.

Doing what is right - come what may.

Reason for hope

You may not know this, but President Bush is *only* the *second* President in history to point out the fact that healthy forests and healthy communities go hand in hand. The first was conservationist Teddy Roosevelt, in a speech at a Society of American Foresters meeting in 1903. Here's what TR said:

"And now, first and foremost, you can never afford to forget for a moment what is the object of our forest policy. That object is *not* to preserve forests because they are beautiful, though that is good in itself; *nor* because they are refuges for the wild creatures of the wilderness, though that, *too*, is good in itself; but the *primary object* of our forest policy, as of the *land policy* of the United States, is the *making of prosperous homes*. It is part of the traditional policy of home making in our country. Every other consideration comes as secondary. You yourselves have got to keep this *practical* object before your minds: to remember that a forest which contributes nothing to the wealth, progress or safety of the country is of *no interest* to the Government, and should be of little interest to the forester. Your attention must be directed to the preservation of forests, *not as an end in itself*, but as the means of preserving and increasing the prosperity of the nation."

President Bush added a modern-day perspective to President Roosevelt's instruction when he spoke in Medford last August.

"I want our forests healthy and I want our economy healthy," he declared. "That's why I strongly support the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan, a plan that would allow the production of a billion board feet of timber per year. This is a plan that was a well thought out plan. It's a plan that was put together to protect wildlife habitat, to protect recreational areas. But it's a plan that's got another dividend, *besides* a healthy forest. It means 100,000 jobs from a *sustainable harvest* on a *small portion* of the forest. The prior Administration developed and agreed to this plan. I support the plan. Congress needs to pass the laws necessary to implement this plan."

And then, as if to insure we all understood that he *is* serious, he held Congress' feet to the proverbial fire in his State of the Union message. Maybe you heard him.

"I have sent you a Healthy Forests Initiative to help prevent the catastrophic fires that devastate communities, kill wildlife and burn away millions of acres of treasured forest. I urge you to pass these measures, for the good of both our environment and our economy. *Even more*, I ask that you take a crucial step and protect our environment in ways that generations before never could have imagined. In *this* century, the greatest environmental progress will come *not* through endless lawsuits or command-and-control regulations, but through technology and innovation."

I would have thought the President's remarks and his plans for rescuing the West from firestorms, both real and political, would have been greeted by thunderous applause throughout our industry. But that has not been the case. Many companies *are* cheering the President. But a few are noticeably absent from the chorus.

After all my years in these trenches you would think that by now I would have grown accustomed to the endless bickering and excuse making that keeps our industry from reclaiming the moral high ground it once occupied in the American psyche. But this latest episode disappoints me more than all the earlier disappointments combined.

Some who have disappointed me are friends. We have known one another for years. We have commiserated and rejoiced, celebrated the birth of new children, wept

over the loss of old friends, cursed the darkness and lit candles to light our way through it. This morning, I hope to light some new candles.

The President's plan is a watershed moment in the history of the forestry in America – a moment *not* unlike that *first* moment nearly a hundred years ago when a fed up and frightened citizenry demanded that its government do something about wildfires that were then burning away western forests and communities.

But it took a catastrophe – the Great 1910 Fire – to finally move Congress, and then only after several very public tongue lashings from Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service and one of Teddy Roosevelt's most trusted allies.

It also took the formation of a partnership that brought together the political and financial resources of the public sector and the entrepreneurial genius of private sector risk takers. Two giants in the history of forestry forged this particular partnership. From the public sector: Bill Greeley, the third chief of the U.S. Forest Service and from the private sector: the visionary George S. Long, Weyerhaeuser Company's first general manager.

The two men shared a common enemy: wildfire. In Mr. Long's case the 1902 Yacolt Burn, which destroyed 23 square miles of company timberland in southwest Washington, and in Mr. Greeley's case the aforementioned 1910 Fire, which destroyed 3 million acres of virgin timber in northern Idaho and western Montana on his watch.

Had it not been for Bill Greeley and George S Long, the modern-day network of firefighting cooperatives that grew out of their shared contempt for wildfire might never have been formed.

Yet history records that these cooperatives were *the reason* why private landowners in the West began to replant their lands after harvest rather than simply abandon them – a practice that seems unthinkable today but was commonplace in the days before locally organized firefighting cooperatives provided the measure of protection landowners needed to justify capital investments in reforestation and tree improvement.

History is repeating itself in the West today. Forests are dying in wildfires as ferocious as any seen since 1910. A fearful public is again demanding government action. And investments in private lands forestry are threatened in a way no one thought could ever happen again.

I cannot recall another moment – certainly not in my lifetime – when so many challenges and opportunities confronted those who believe in and practice forestry. I'm reminded of the title of Shelby Foote's fine chronicle of the Civil War's Gettysburg Campaign: "Stars In Their Courses." A title that was Mr. Foote's acknowledgement of the hand of Divine Providence in the outcome of a dreadful war that, for a time, threatened to tear America in two. Recall that before the Civil War the proper phrase was, "The United States are" but today we say, "The United States is" because amid the *unspeakable horror* of an now *unimaginable war* an "are" became an "is."

Stars *were* in their courses – and they are in ours too.

But for some companies the temptation to simply turn away from the President's Initiatives is very strong. They own more than enough land to sustain their mills and they no longer need the timber that once flowed from the West's federal forests. So, while they admire the President's moral clarity – and hope he can do something about the wildfires that threaten their capital-intensive plantations – the political calculus seems to weigh more heavily on them than the possible loss of forests worth millions of dollars. So when the President called, they hung up!

How do you do that?

How in an industry that has had *so few friends* in the White House do you say "No" to a President who wants to *help* you?

How do you say, "We're with you in spirit Mr. President but this idea of yours is just too controversial for us to take a public stand."

Companies *hate* controversy – especially publicly traded companies. They want *everyone* to like them. Witness Pepsi's desire to appear patriotic by incorporating our Pledge of Allegiance in a new marketing program. But then witness their precipitous fall



from grace after it was learned they had removed the words “Under God” from the Pledge because, as they later explained, “We did not want to offend anyone!”

In the company’s misguided attempt to make *new friends* it instead made *new enemies*. No wonder.

Forest products companies that refuse to *publicly* support the President’s Healthy Forests Initiative for fear of offending someone will very likely face the *same* public wrath Pepsi now faces – and for the *same* reason.

You *cannot* defend your social license to practice intensive forestry on *your* land and, in your next breath, refuse to help the President save the *public’s* forests.

You *cannot* sidestep this issue and expect no one will notice or care. Because the fact is this enormously popular President’s Healthy Forests Initiative is also enormously popular – and we have the polling data to prove it.

Everything you *say* you stand for is on the table. Your publicly declared commitments to the environment, forest conservation and sustainable forestry will *all* be called into question if you refuse to step forward *publicly* to help this President implement his forest initiatives.

*Why?* Because the public is going to perceive that you are advancing *your* interests at the expense of *theirs* – and you are going to be in big trouble with them.

I can hear their questions now:

“Can you tell us why you are more worried about the value of *your* land than the West’s national forest legacy?”

“Why are you investing money in foreign countries while public forests here at home you once *depended* on are burning to the ground?”

“What are you telling shareholders who are asking how you determined that your capital-intensive plantations face no undue risk from the insect hordes that are turning adjacent federal forests into firetraps?”

“Why on earth would someone you *don’t even know* want to name a wildfire after your company?”

“Have you stopped beating your wife yet?”

Who was that said, “The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in time of crisis refuse to take a stand.” They were right.

Wouldn't it be more prudent to say, “Mr. President, we are prepared to join you in a new public-private sector partnership to help solve this terrible wildfire problem?”

Giving land to conservation groups and taking a tax write-off is easy. This is hard. This is Forestry's Marshall Plan: a defining moment in forestry's long history. And history has suddenly blurred the line between public and fiduciary responsibility. Your mettle is being tested – and the public will surely judge you by your actions or inactions. So will your shareholders.

It is painful to watch old friends make mistakes you know they will later regret. In the first place, I expected better of them. I still do.

I think they have underestimated President Bush.

I think they have confused what was once a narrowly defined timber issue with what has become one of the greatest environmental challenges of our generation.

And they have *greatly* underestimated the force of political winds blowing in America today. But the President has not.

My environmentalist friend Marty Moore, who runs a new grass roots outfit in Arizona, gave voice to these winds in a recent *Evergreen* interview. He said, “We recognize that if we lose our forests we lose much more than trees. We lose a very appealing lifestyle that makes the Southwest an attractive place for businesses and families alike. We cannot afford to leave our future to chance, so we are bringing together people who share our belief that restoring forests beats watching them burn to the ground.”

The Moral Clarity imbedded in these political winds has unleashed grass roots energies unlike any I have witnessed in nearly 20 years. It is fueling formation of a much broader, far more sophisticated coalition of interests than those that flourished during Spotted Owl days. And unlike the old coalition – which relied on industry money and industry cues – this new movement *does not need the industry*. It has the President.

What I am watching is Hope personified.

If ever there was a *time* for renewed optimism, for us to soldier on in this awful war, *it is now*, because now, for the *first time* in years fresh troops are joining us in the trenches: men and women like my friend Marty Moore whose Ph.D. is in public policy not biology or forestry.

Marty's outfit doesn't represent a timber community or the timber industry. Nor do any of the other groups that are springing up around the West. *They represent an idea: a new vision.* It has clear skies, jogging trails, concerts in the park, fly rods, ski lodges, golf courses, fine wines, song birds, big trees, elk, SUV's and DSL lines running all through it. Life is good – or was until the wildfire calamity struck. Now those who *were* living this vision are trying to figure out how to keep it from burning to the ground – and it has suddenly occurred to them that adding a sawmill and a biomass plant to their vision keeps it alive.

Some folks in our industry are pretty cynical about this. They say things like, “Serves them right for running us out of town in the first place.”

Maybe so, but some of us deserved to be run out of town – in the first place.

But for those of us who have hoped and prayed for *that one clearly recognizable moment* in time when we might bridge the cultural chasm that separates our increasingly urban society from its rural heritage *that time has come.* The moment is now.

New visionaries like Bill Greeley and George S. Long need to step forward *now* - and that's where you come in, because without *your* knowledge, experience and capital *our culture* – our rural timber communities - won't be a part of this new vision.

The President's instincts were good when he decided to spend some of his political capital on the West's wildfire crisis. It *was* the right thing to do. *But this is the right thing to do too*, because despite capital risks facing all of us, we who personify science, technology, entrepreneurship and hands on experience with nature aren't going to get another chance like this one anytime soon, if ever. I, for one, am not willing to let it slip through my fingers.

Some of you have asked me about rumors of a grand scale campaign in support of the President's Initiatives. Unfortunately, these rumors aren't true – at least not in a

modern-day sense: and here I reference the 400 *million dollars* environmental groups have thus far spent on climate building for their roadless initiative.

What *is* true is that a few companies here in the West are passing the hat, hoping to raise enough money to help fund the grass roots mobilization that is underway.

Bruce Vincent and I have been working behind the scenes on elements of this program since late last fall. And I am happy to report we have made good progress. For this blessing I want to publicly thank the companies, associations and individuals here this morning that so quickly stepped to the plate. Your support and reassurances have meant a great deal to both Bruce and me.

Shortly, the first round of materials Bruce and I have developed will be available on the campaign website. We'll also have lots of printed material you can use in your own public outreach: copies of *Plain Talk*, a newsletter we've developed to keep you abreast of the President's Initiatives, question and answer sheets, fact sheets, discussion papers, sample letters to the editor, sample speeches, special *Evergreen* issues. If we don't have it and you need it we'll try to get it for you.

Recognize though that this will be a much different grass roots outreach than any you've ever seen – a reflection of the fact that our movement is both more mature and more diverse. I think it unlikely you will see any convoys or big rallies. The Internet has changed everything. Now we can call many thousands to arms at the speed of light without ever leaving our homes or offices.

From bitter defeat in the late 80s and early 90s we learned that working *behind* the scenes – *not* becoming unwitting piñatas for environmental fundraisers - is a more effective and efficient way to work.

We've also learned that we have friends on both sides of the political aisle. And why shouldn't we? Concern for the environment should be everyone's business – and everyone's responsibility. What riles our enemies is fact that the President thinks science, private capital and free markets can do more to help clean our air and water than lawyers and bureaucrats. To the horror of the Establishment Left, Democrats are now embracing his approach.

Hardly a day passes now without some press report concerning the President's proposals. Some of these reports are accurate, but some aren't, so let's spend a couple of

minutes separating fact from fiction. Stripped to its core, the Healthy Forests Initiative has two missions - both clearly spelled out on the White House website and on several different websites maintained by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

The *first* mission is to protect the thousands of rural western communities that now lie directly in the path of catastrophic wildfire.

The second mission is to begin the long and arduous process of pulling desperately ill federal forests back from the brink of collapse – a process that will take at least 50 years to complete, maybe longer. To do this federal land managers will employ two tools with long histories of success: thinning and prescribed fire, generally in combination. This isn't the kind of work that will generate huge volumes of high quality timber, but it *will* gradually reduce the *risk* of catastrophic wildfire in forests that are very important to the American people.

And make no mistake: *the risk is real*. 86 percent of Oregon's national forest acres are in Condition Class 3 or 2, meaning the risk of catastrophic fire is high or moderate and getting worse.

In Arizona and New Mexico metastasizing annual growth in national forests is the equivalent of a solid block of wood the dimensions of a football field stretching a mile into the sky.

Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, northern California and eastern Washington are in no better shape. The West that lies east of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada ranges is entering its sixth straight year of drought. Government reports estimate that 190 million acres of publicly owned forest and rangeland need treatment.

You who know the woods so well know that this crisis isn't going to get better on its own. 7.1 million acres were lost to wildfire last summer, more than 8 million three years ago, some 48 million over the last 10 years. Who knows what this summer will bring?

It's important for all Americans to know what the President's Healthy Forests Initiative *isn't*. It isn't about "about logging without laws," as some environmentalists claim. It isn't "about cutting down old growth trees in roadless areas." And it isn't a post-election payoff to big timber interests rumored to have bankrolled the President's run for

the White House. Anyone who thinks this doesn't know how politically inept our industry is.

So despite what you are hearing, the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Forest Management Act, the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act remain the laws of the land under the aegis of the President's Healthy Forests Initiative.

What *will* be different is that the public will finally have some *choice* in the matter. Right now, the *only* option they have is to do *nothing* – to stand by while forests burn to the ground before their very eyes. Every other choice has been stolen away by the lawyer-environmentalist culture.

Someone in a recent audience took exception to my disgust with the lawyers and sue-happy environmentalists.

In response I said, "Let's put this awful situation on a very personal level. Let's say you are diagnosed with cancer. And you are told that – although your cancer is treatable - *your* only choice is to go home and die. That is *exactly* the choice the lawyer-environmentalist culture offers Americans who want to rescue their national forests: go home and die. Let the cancer do its' grim work."

The President does not think you should have to go home and die. He wants you to have access to tools you can use to battle the fiery cancer that is consuming your forests. Tools for early detection and treatment, tools of hope.

Journalists love extremes. It makes their job easy.  
"Environmentalists say this but timber industry says that."

On it goes, with no end in sight.

But the characterization *isn't* valid anymore, because the timber industry isn't the economic or political force it once was. Companies that survived the collapse of the federal timber sale program *aren't willing* to risk their capital on promises the federal government clearly cannot keep. Even *USA Today* – hardly as fortress for conservative thought - picked up the story a couple of weeks ago in a piece in which it bemoaned the loss of milling infrastructure needed to process and market wood fiber that must be

removed from federal forests where the increasing risk of catastrophic wildfire threatens both communities and the environment.

The extremes *have* changed. To be sure, radical environmentalists are still out there declaring that catastrophic wildfire is natural and that the President's plan is unconstitutional. But across much of the West the timber industry has exited the debate – and has been replaced by *National Guard troops* whose job it is to help terrified families flee their on-fire neighborhoods.

So here are the *new extremes*, perched on scales held high by Lady Justice, blindfolded to insure her impartiality. On one side, the lawyer-environmentalist culture, and on the other side, *uniformed National Guard troops* ready to swing into action at a moment's notice - because the *only choice* left for communities *seeking justice* is to evacuate *before* the fire reaches their homes and businesses.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you want to know *why* so many people in communities that don't even *have* a sawmill - or any loggers listed in their phone books – have joined this fight, *this is the reason*. As much as they probably *like* the National Guard, they don't like to see them *in their neighborhoods!* *They don't like the choice these uniforms represent!*

No wonder, then, that *they* are now the ones leading the charge, pounding the table, demanding that Congress authorize and fund the Forest Service to do the thinning and forest restoration work necessary to protect their communities, their lives, their watersheds, their health, their recreation areas, their way of life.

And make *no* mistake. They want *a lot more* than a fire trench dug around their towns. *They want their forest heritage back and they want it protected*, all of it: the fish, the wildlife, the rivers and streams, the habitat they know federal laws are *supposed* to protect, the biological diversity and all the rest that is burning away now because environmental laws are failing our society. *And they know in their guts that driving out of town with a trunk full of family mementoes isn't good forestry.*

Have you ever wondered *who* unilaterally decided for *us* that it is better to let our forest heritage burn to the ground when we know how to protect it? I have.

Who gave them – whoever “*they*” are - the authority to speak for a nation, to reject science and technology and hands on experience with nature that could be used to help the environment and humanity?

We don’t tolerate this belligerence anywhere else in our society, not with hunger, poverty, social security, defense, education, Medicare or AIDS. So why are we tolerating it here?

The President means to rescue us from this tyranny, but before the real work can begin in earnest Congress needs to modernize some failing rules and regulations that have become weapons in the hands of anarchists intent on destroying us. It is *this* corruption, this feeding ground for the lawyer culture that the President intends to clear away.

Environmentalism has changed profoundly over the last 25 years. No longer is it the over-the-back-fence neighborhood affair it once was. Now it is an *industry* with CEOs, CFOs and CIOs. It makes money selling *conflict*, suing the government, then secretly investing its ill-gotten gains in the *same* capital markets it publicly vilifies almost daily. It also extorts money from these markets, specifically from companies that want to avoid the public humiliation that comes visits from Ninja-look-alikes who enjoy rappelling from rooftops for television news crews. Sadly, many of America’s largest companies succumb to these tactics. For them “looking green” on the five o’clock news is apparently more important than principle: more essential than having a moral compass.

The timber industry that some environmentalists love to hate is also changing. Gone are the wild and wooly days when companies ran roughshod over public concern and forests as well. Today, no industry in America is more heavily regulated or closely watched than the logging and forest product industries.

You who log for a living work in a fish bowl. There is *no* escaping press or regulatory scrutiny. *And that’s fine. Because of your transparency*, the press is finally starting to question those who falsely accuse you of wrongdoing.

The press is even coming to realize that our industry *doesn’t need* big old trees anymore. Mills today prefer a steady diet of smaller, high quality, uniformly sized trees. These trees, which grow mainly in privately owned forest plantations, are a staple in the



technologically advanced engineered wood industry. And it is the engineered wood industry – with its marvelous array of structurally superior dimension and panel products – that is transforming the home building industry in America, *reducing* labor costs and construction time, *limiting* on the job injuries and, ultimately, *making* new homes more affordable.

But to hear some environmentalists tell it you would think our industry is salivating at the mouth over the prospect of chopping down the last old growth forest in America. Listen to this moan from the ever-shrill American Lands Council - the day *after* voters gave Republicans the House, Senate and Presidency for the first time in more than 40 years.

“There is no doubt a cocky White House and their gloating allies in Congress are going to use their inflated muscle to try to open up public forests to industrial strength logging. Their mid-term gains can only mean political Armageddon for national forests.”

Like the Liberal clergy that hopes you won't buy another SUV these folks hope you will send them money. Their investment portfolio is in shambles, so they're back out there whoring on the same old street corners.

Missing from this diatribe is the fact that it *does not matter if the federal government ever again sells a stick of timber to a sawmill in the West*. The fact is that it will *still* be necessary for the government to *manage* the public's forests – to periodically thin trees in order to maintain stand structure within ecological limits - and to *attack* insect and disease infestations that periodically invade forests. If we *don't* manage our federal forests, nature will. For that matter, nature is – and judging from the outcry I'd say the public don't like the outcome.

So the *real* question is this: “*What will the government do with the public's trees, with trees that are going to be thinned from sick forests? Will they landfill them, burn them in big bonfires – or sell them to companies that can transform them into products society wants and uses?*”

*This is not small question* because environmentalists who oppose logging, but recognize that the public has again had it with wildfire, think *this is the answer*: cut down the trees, stack them in huge piles and toss a match on the pile.

“If you try to sell them to greedy capitalists we'll sue.”

Fortunately, public tolerance for this nonsense is at its end. So between exponential growth in Bruce Vincent's Rolodex, the tireless efforts of many others who are already involved in this campaign and my own work with Forest Service retirees and sporting groups whose members hunt and fish we're finding lots of rural *and urban* folks ready, willing and able to help us help the President.

And now I have some important things for you to do in the coming days and months that will help also push the President's Healthy Forests agenda through Congress.

First, if you are not registered to vote, do it today.

Second, keep track of who votes with or against you on issues that impact your business, your community and your family. Publicly thank those who support you and publicly condemn those who do not.

Third, *with every ounce of your fiber and being get involved in this campaign*. I know money is tight. Give what you can.

What is *most* important is that you give of *your time*. Get up to speed on what the President is proposing. Then talk to your employees, your church council, school board and civic groups, your neighbors, kids and in-laws, your county commissioners, city council and state and federal legislators. Talk to the press, businesses that depend on your business – and the companies you log for. Make sure they contributed to this campaign – and if they haven't, ask them to reconsider their decision.

There have thus far been three public comment periods vital to the success of the President's plan. How many of you took the time to write a letter in support of categorical exclusions or appeals rule revisions the President proposed?

There will be more comment periods in the months to come. Don't miss these opportunities to say – again and again – that you support the President and his Healthy Forests Initiative. And don't forget to share you comments with members of Congress that support the President. They need to know you are standing with them too.

One more thing before I go: write the President a letter and thank him for his moral courage, for lending us some of *his political capital* so that we might save our forests, our communities, our way of life, ourselves. We are – in Winston Churchill's

inspiring words – “still masters of our fate, still captains of our souls.” This will be – again in Churchill’s words – “a war of unknown warriors.” But as he told his countrymen when all seemed lost, “let us all strive without failing in faith or in duty, and the dark curse of Hitler will be lifted from our age.”

It is time for us to remove *our* dark curse, to lift it from our age, to *seize* this moment in time and squeeze from it every glimmer of hope and opportunity that we possibly can. If we fail, we will have no one to blame but ourselves. And future generations will surely do that for us.

I carry in my wallet a handwritten note my late mother wrote to me on the back of one of my business cards at a particularly dark moment in my life. Here it is. It reads as follows: “Believing in angels, but seeing none, he borrowed their wings and walked out to the end of the road to meet his fate.”

I am walking out to the end of the road now. Others are walking with me. Come walk with us. The President has called and we don’t want to keep him waiting.

Thank you.