

Dear Senator/Assemblyman/Assemblywoman.....,

I am a member of the .....Chapter of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA). NYFOA has joined many other environmental and forest stakeholder organizations in a coalition to promote the Empire Forests for the Future Initiative (EFFI) announced in Governor Cuomo's 2017 "State of the State" address.

EFFI recognizes the critical importance of our state's forested landscape to the environment, the economy and our quality-of-life. Because forested properties are not generally eligible for agricultural exemptions, property taxes are particularly burdensome for private family forest owners. Revisions to the Forest Property Tax Law proposed under EFFI would extend eligibility for tax relief to hundreds of thousands of private woodlot owners and reduce the steady conversion of forestlands to other purposes having negative, rather than positive impacts on the environment.

Another key feature of the EFFI is a new forest stewardship program that will assist forest owners in dealing with the impacts on forest health caused by invasive species. This is an uphill battle for us, and we really need help with it.

EFFI is a broad, comprehensive plan, addressing the concerns of a large, diverse coalition of stakeholders. We have urged the Governor to include funding for EFFI in his executive budget for 2018. I hope we can depend on your support when it comes to the legislature.

Assistance in identifying your legislators and their contact information can be found at:

<http://nyassembly.gov/mem/> or  
<http://www.nysenate.gov/senators-committees>