

As Northern Californians know all too well, the decline in active forest management on our federal lands has left our communities vulnerable to the threat of catastrophic wildfire and caused the near loss of forest-related jobs. I recently introduced [legislation](#) to reduce the endless stream of frivolous appeals and lawsuits that block commonsense forest management projects designed to reduce this fire risk. I was also pleased to join seventeen other members of Congress this week in cosponsoring

[H.R. 1996](#)

, the Government Litigation Savings Act. This bill makes targeted reforms to the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA) in order to ensure that taxpayer dollars do not help fund environmental activists that abuse our judicial system through endless lawsuits.

Congress passed the EAJA in 1980 to allow individuals, small businesses and other entities the right to recover attorneys' fees and legal costs in the event they prevail in a lawsuit against the federal government. This law was intended to allow those with limited means to challenge the federal government in a court of law and be reimbursed for the cost of doing so if they win. However, a cottage industry of environmental groups has taken advantage of this well-meaning law by repeatedly suing the federal government and then seeking reimbursement for doing so. Some of these organizations have sued the federal government over 1,200 times while receiving \$35 million in taxpayer dollars for doing so – even in cases where the government has settled out of court.

This is a gross injustice to American taxpayers and Northern Californians who are forced to cope with the consequences of environmental litigation – including overstocked forests prone to wildfire, high gas prices from the protest of domestic oil and gas drilling, and the delay of critical public safety infrastructure such as levees and road improvements – while also funding this activity with their tax dollars. The Government Savings Litigation Act will address this issue by requiring environmental groups to show a “direct and personal monetary interest” in a federal action to be eligible for payments. It also caps the amount of attorneys' fees that can be paid to these groups. In doing so, this bill returns the EAJA to the original intent of Congress and protects taxpayers from subsidizing well-funded environmental groups that use rampant lawsuits to obstruct common sense policies.