



Steel, Concrete Groups Oppose Mass Timber Bill

A bipartisan bill created to promote the use of mass timber in the construction of federal government buildings and military facilities is being opposed by steel and concrete industry groups, who say the legislation is “anti-competitive.”

The Mass Timber Federal Buildings Act (S4149), introduced to Congress on April 17 by U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) and Jim Risch (R-Idaho), would give preference in federal building contracts to those using mass timber products.

In a press release announcing the legislation, Merkley and Risch said, “The mass timber industry is important to Idaho, Oregon, and the entire Pacific Northwest’s economy and environment. The bill builds upon the opportunity presented by mass timber products to create jobs in rural and urban communities, reduce wildfire risk, and increase forest resiliency.”

However, the steel industry disagrees with favoring mass timber products in building contracts. In a joint letter sent to Congress on May 17, the American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC), the American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI), and the Steel Manufacturers Association (SMA) outlined their opposition to the bill.

The groups argue that the act would “disrupt the competitive bidding process,” that mass timber’s sustainability claims are “misleading and overstated,” and they are calling for thorough testing and code development to address safety concerns with mass timber products. The letter also expressed concerns about supply-chain issues.

The National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA) has also thrown its weight behind the opposition. Lionel Lemay, NRMCA’s executive vice president of structures and sustainability, told the Engineering News Record, “Federal construction policy should set forward standards and guidelines and not pick winners and losers in the construction materials space.”



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