



## Banning Illegal Logging

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**W**ood flooring professionals might not monitor activity in Washington, D.C., on a regular basis, but important legislation was implemented this past summer that affects readers of this magazine. Congress recently passed the illegal logging ban, which will have a tremendous impact on the wood flooring industry. The ban is an amendment to the U.S. Lacey Act, which was originally mandated to protect the illegal trafficking of wildlife throughout the world. The new amendment has expanded the Lacey Act to include wood and wood products, and it specifically prohibits the import, sale or trade of wood and other forest products harvested illegally outside the United States. With the passage of this legislation, these materials can no longer enter the U.S. market legally.

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The NWFA worked on behalf of its members with a coalition of industry leaders to promote the ban. The coalition included the Hardwood Federation, the International Wood Products Association, the National Hardwood Lumber Association and the American Forest & Paper Association. Together, these organizations worked to present a unified voice in Washington, D.C., on behalf of wood and wood products professionals all over the world.

This legislation is a huge accomplishment for the wood products industry because it not only protects our world's forests, but it also protects industry representatives who practice their due diligence when purchasing wood products from other countries. With this legislation, the United States has stated clearly that it will no longer tolerate the harvesting of our world's forests through illegal means. In addition, for the first time, the burden of proof is placed on the government, not the purchaser of the product. That is a huge step forward for our industry.

The ban also is a first step toward leveling the playing field for U.S. manufacturers in terms of pricing and global competitiveness.

Low-cost, illegally harvested wood products have flooded the market in recent years, driving down prices and quality. With this new legislation, products entering the United States will be monitored more closely, with fair wages and safe working conditions mandated for foreign suppliers.

The legislation was championed by two Oregon politicians: Rep. Earl Blumenauer and Sen. Ron Wyden. The House and Senate Agricultural Committees and the House Natural Resources Committee also worked to promote the legislation, which received support from both political parties in Congress.

The strong support this legislation received reaffirms for the world that the United States is focused on protecting our environment, not just here on our own shores, but globally as well. At the same time, it also helps to assure that the resources that help to provide our livelihood will be available for generations to come. ■