

DATE

[Name of Senator or Congressman]

Address of Senator/Congressman

--visit www.visi.com/juan/congress to find the address you need

RE: SAVE THE RECREATION RESIDENCE PROGRAM FROM THE CUFFA ACT

Dear fill in the name of the person you are addressing:

PARAGRAPH 1: The topic you wish to discuss

SAMPLE: An assault is being waged on the Recreation Residence Program by the Forest Service's (FS) interpretation of the 2000 CUFFA ACT. When Congress passed CUFFA (the Cabin User Fee Fairness Act) in October 2000, it was to ensure that cabin owners receive fair treatment concerning the special use fees charged of all permittees. This year it has become painfully evident that CUFFA is not working as it was intended. Cabin owners are being appraised on their permit lots as if they were fee simple and not subject to the severe restrictions permit holders face. These restrictions affect the market value of our cabins, yet are not taken into consideration when the appraisals are conducted. Briefly, a few of the many restrictions I refer to are:

1. We cannot live there permanently;
 2. We cannot rent our cabins without permission;
 3. We can be told we HAVE TO REMOVE our cabin if the Forest Service determines that the lot has a higher and better use;
- Plus a multitude of restrictions on the size, construction and use of our cabins.

Specific FS restrictions vary significantly from region to region. Yet, CUFFA establishes a uniform 5% annual fee to be charged nationwide which is said to reflect all restrictions. How can a fixed fee be applied to variable circumstances and yet be considered fair or accurate?

PARAGRAPH 2: Explain the problem in more detail

SAMPLE: CUFFA was intended to provide a fair, market-based appraisal of lot values that would result in a 'fair fee' for cabin permits on the National Forests. This requires recognizing the full impact of the Forest Service permit restrictions, as well as regional and local restrictions, on market values. CUFFA was supposed to do this and we believe that was the intent of Congress. However, adjusting for permit restrictions within the appraisal has been disallowed by the FS. The 'reduced fee' (5% of fee simple market value) does not fully account for the negative impact of all of those restrictions on the use of the lot.

PARAGRAPH 3: Personalize the situation by telling your story and history as a permit holder

SAMPLE: Every year my family and I spend the X amount of time at our cabin in the [] National Forest located in [state]. When we purchased the cabin, our annual fee was approximately \$1800 (Insert your number). We don't want to have to sell our cabin, but with the new appraisals done this year, ***our fee has jumped from \$1800 to \$5200 –***

TRIPLED(Insert your numbers)! If this was land I owned and I could do with it what I pleased, I could justify the expense more readily. But, I cannot understand how CUFFA can erroneously proclaim to insure fairness to the permit holder when obviously it is not fair to exclude the restrictions when calculating our appraisals. We believe the Recreation Residence Program is an important program to continue. But, like us, many of our friends and neighbors are being priced out of cabins that have been in their families for generations.

PARAGRAPH 4: Summarize the situation and formalize your request for action

SAMPLE: If a solution is not found, ultimately many cabin owners will be forced pay exorbitantly high fees to obtain costly second appraisals, file appeals, and pursue legal and political means to attempt to find a fair, market-based solution. Or they will be forced to put their cabins up for sale or remove them from the forest.

I am writing to request that Congress hold hearings on the issue of exorbitant Recreation Residence fees to truly understand the scope of this problem and outline and explore solutions that are fair to both permittees and the American public. This issue is not about paying fair fees for our use of National Forest lands – it is about paying outrageous fees as a result of a flawed appraisal process.

Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to address my concerns.

Sincerely,

Your name, address, phone #