



EXCESS URBAN HEAT MITIGATION ACT (H.R. 7534)

Background

Above-average and record-warm maximum temperatures are increasing in the United States, with 2013 through 2021 ranking among the warmest years on record. Climate change is intensifying heat frequency, duration, and temperatures, which affect public health and air quality, infrastructure maintenance, the frequency of natural disasters, and more. This extreme heat creates a “heat island effect” in urban areas because the infrastructure absorbs more heat and creates pockets of higher temperatures compared to natural landscapes.

Responsible for more than 600 deaths annually, extreme heat is a leading weather-related cause of death in the United States and puts communities at risk. Underserved communities—including low-income, minorities, tribal, and indigenous populations—are disproportionately impacted by extreme heat because of factors such as less tree coverage and higher surface land temperatures.

Landscape architects design and implement green infrastructure and nature-based solutions to mitigate impacts of climate change such as extreme heat. Landscape architecture solutions—including tree planting programs, green roof installations, and other cooling techniques—have proven track records to help mitigate these climate-related impacts.

Solution

To address and mitigate extreme heat, Representatives Ruben Gallego (AZ) and Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ) introduced H.R. 7534, the Excess Urban Heat Mitigation Act, on April 18, 2022.

This legislation appropriates \$30 million in each fiscal year 2023 through 2030 for a grant program that would help communities implement heat-mitigation strategies, including landscape architecture solutions like green roofs, tree planting, bus and transit shelters, and other cooling techniques. This bill calls for grant recipients to participate in a robust engagement plan with communities, a process in which landscape architects are leaders.

Additionally, this bill prioritizes projects in low-income and Environmental Justice communities when awarding grants, and it also creates an oversight board—consisting of nonprofit, academia, and research representatives experienced in urban heat mitigation, environmental justice matters, or related areas—that will help select grant recipients and review progress on an annual basis.

Request

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) urges Congress to act so landscape architects and others bring real climate solutions to communities across the nation. We ask that you support the Excess Urban Heat Mitigation Act (H.R. 7534), and work to introduce companion language in the U.S. Senate.