



TCIA MEMBER ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Talking Points & Advocacy Asks for Decision Makers

Prepared by the TCIA Grassroots & Political Advocacy Program

May 2026

***Imagine a world where tree care regulations are written
by the people who climb, prune and protect trees every day***

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How to Use This Toolkit

TIER I: TOP LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

1. OSHA Tree Care Safety Standard
2. Workforce Access & Immigration Reform
3. Wildfire Mitigation & Utility Vegetation Management

TIER II: ACTIVE MONITORING & ENGAGEMENT

4. Responsible Pesticide Use & Preemption
5. Urban & Community Forestry Funding & Standards
6. CDL Flexibility & Drug Testing Reform

TIER III: EMERGING & HORIZON ISSUES

7. State Licensure for Arborists & Tree Care Businesses
8. Insurance, Drones & Hazard Tree Determinations
9. State-Level Legislative Trends

Quick-Reference Summary Table

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit equips TCIA members and staff with the key messages and specific asks you need to have productive conversations with elected officials, their staffers, agency leaders, and other policy decision makers. Whether you're attending a fly-in, hosting a legislator at your job site, calling your representative's office, or writing a letter, this toolkit has you covered.

Each Issue Section Includes:

- **Why It Matters:** A brief overview of why the issue matters to tree care professionals
- **Talking Points:** Concise, data-backed messages you can use in any conversation
- **The Ask:** Specific, actionable requests organized by audience
- **Key Stat:** A highlighted data point to anchor your conversation

Quick Tips for Effective Advocacy

- **Lead with your story.** Legislators remember people, not policy papers. Start with who you are, what your company does, and why this issue affects your crew and community.
- **Be specific with your ask.** Don't just raise an issue - tell them exactly what you'd like them to do. A clear ask gets a clear answer.
- **Leave something behind.** A one-page summary or business card gives staff a way to follow up. This toolkit's talking points can serve as your leave-behind.
- **Follow up.** Send a thank-you email within 48 hours. Reference what you discussed and reiterate your ask.
- **Log your interaction.** Report your meeting on the TCIA Advocacy Action Center (tcia.quorum.us) so we can track our collective impact.

TIER I: TOP LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

These are issues where TCIA should actively advocate, mobilize members, and seek concrete policy outcomes.

1. OSHA Tree Care Safety Standard

WHY IT MATTERS: Tree care is one of the most dangerous professions in America, yet there is no OSHA standard specific to our industry. Workers are being injured and killed under a patchwork of ill-fitting regulations. A dedicated standard would save lives, reduce costs, and bring regulatory clarity to the entire industry.

 **KEY STAT:** Tree care workers face a fatality rate of 30-41 per 100,000 workers — as much as 11 times the national average. Between 2020-2023, TCIA documented 243 fatalities — an average of 61 per year.

TALKING POINTS

- **The tree care industry is one of the most dangerous in America - and there's no standard to match.** TCIA data shows tree care workers face a fatality rate of 30 to 41 per 100,000 workers, as much as 11 times the national average, yet OSHA has no industry-specific safety standard.
- **Without a dedicated standard, enforcement is a guessing game.** Right now, OSHA enforces tree care safety using a patchwork of general industry and construction standards that often don't fit, and sometimes misidentify best practices. This creates confusion for employers, employees, and inspectors alike.
- **A tree care-specific standard would save lives and money.** Clearer rules mean fewer injuries, lower workers' comp costs, reduced liability, and more predictable insurance premiums, outcomes that benefit workers, employers, and insurers.
- **This has broad, bipartisan support - the holdup is at OSHA.** Congress and industry agree on the need. TCIA has led this effort for over a decade, and the consensus standard (ANSI Z133) already exists. OSHA just needs to act before the regulatory window closes.
- **Every year of delay costs lives.** Between 2020 and 2023, TCIA documented 243 tree care fatalities. Over 66% of fatal incidents involved workers who had been on the job one year or less. A standard that requires proper training and safety protocols is urgently needed.

THE ASK

Federal Lawmakers

- **Urge OSHA to publish the NPRM immediately.** This standard has been in development for over a decade. Please send a letter to the Secretary of Labor and OSHA Administrator urging release without further delay.
- **Co-sign a bipartisan congressional letter to OSHA** supporting the completion of the tree care operations standard. Congressional attention accelerates agency action.

- **Protect OSHA's rulemaking budget.** Ensure the agency has the resources and staffing to finalize this and other critical safety standards.

OSHA / DOL Officials

- **Publish the NPRM before the current administration's regulatory window closes.** Further delay risks resetting the clock again during an administration transition.
- **Engage TCIA and industry stakeholders in the comment process.** We have decades of data, consensus standards (ANSI Z133), and on-the-ground expertise ready to support a strong, workable final rule.

State Lawmakers

- **Adopt or reference the ANSI Z133 Safety Standard at the state level** as an interim measure while the federal rulemaking process continues.
-

2. Workforce Access & Immigration Reform

WHY IT MATTERS: Tree care companies face persistent, structural workforce shortages. These challenges stem from limited access to legal temporary workers, uncertainty around TPS, and growing competition for skilled domestic labor.



KEY STAT: The H-2B statutory cap of 66,000 visas hasn't changed since 1990. In Spring 2025, the chance of landing in the first H-2B lottery group was just 24.5%.

TALKING POINTS

- **Tree care's labor shortage isn't cyclical, it's structural.** Our industry depends on seasonal and skilled labor that the domestic market simply can't fully supply. Without reliable access to legal temporary workers, companies can't meet demand, and communities go underserved.
- **The H-2B program is critical, but it's broken.** The statutory cap of 66,000 visas hasn't changed since 1990, yet demand far outstrips supply. In Spring 2025, the chance of landing in the first lottery group was just 24.5%. Companies can't plan a season around a lottery.
- **Supplemental visas help, but they're discretionary and unpredictable.** DHS released 64,716 supplemental H-2B visas for FY 2025, but these allocations aren't guaranteed year to year; companies need stability, not annual uncertainty.
- **Workforce access and worker safety go hand in hand.** When companies can't find enough workers, remaining crews are overworked, corners get cut, and accident rates rise. Reliable workforce access is a safety issue.
- **We also need to invest in the domestic pipeline.** TCIA supports apprenticeships, technical education, and training programs that build a skilled, professional workforce from within; but these take time. H-2B reform is essential to bridge the gap.

THE ASK

Federal Lawmakers

- **Co-sponsor legislation to raise or eliminate the H-2B statutory cap.** The 66,000-visa cap hasn't been updated since 1990 and is woefully insufficient for industries like tree care.
- **Support making the supplemental H-2B visa allocation permanent and automatic** rather than requiring annual DHS discretionary action. Companies need certainty to plan their seasons.
- **Support returning worker exemptions.** Workers who have previously participated in the H-2B program and have a clean record should not count against the cap.
- **Fund and expand domestic workforce development programs** including apprenticeships, CTE, and job training partnerships that build a pipeline of skilled tree care professionals.

State Lawmakers

- **Invest in career and technical education (CTE) pathways** that include arboriculture and urban forestry. Help grow the next generation of tree care professionals.

3. Wildfire Mitigation & Utility Vegetation Management

WHY IT MATTERS: TCIA members play a critical role in mitigating wildfire risk through professional vegetation management around power lines and in the wildland-urban interface. Inconsistent standards across states create liability exposure, insurance challenges, and operational inefficiencies.



KEY STAT: The federal government allocated over \$7.3 billion in FY2025 for wildfire purposes across the Forest Service and DOI. The Community Wildfire Defense Grant program alone is a \$1 billion, five-year initiative.

TALKING POINTS

- **TCIA members are on the front lines of wildfire prevention.** Professional tree care and vegetation management around power lines and in the wildland-urban interface are among the most effective tools we have to reduce catastrophic wildfire risk.
- **There is no consistent national standard of care for this work.** Fragmented state rules mean different expectations in every jurisdiction, creating liability exposure, inconsistent hazard tree assessments, and operational inefficiency for multi-state companies.
- **Federal investment in wildfire mitigation is significant and growing.** The federal government allocated over \$7.3 billion in FY2025 for wildfire purposes, and programs like the \$1 billion CWDG are actively funding community-level mitigation. TCIA members should be performing this work.
- **Consensus standards already exist; they just need to be recognized.** TCIA and the industry have developed professional standards (ANSI A300, Z133) for vegetation management and hazard tree assessment. Federal recognition would improve safety and ensure quality.
- **This is a bipartisan issue with real urgency.** Wildfire risk is expanding geographically, and energy reliability is a national priority. Vegetation management is where climate resilience, infrastructure protection, and public safety intersect.

THE ASK

Federal Lawmakers

- **Maintain and increase funding for wildfire mitigation programs** including CWDG, Hazardous Fuels Reduction, and USFS State & Private Forestry programs.
- **Require that federally funded vegetation management work be performed by qualified, accredited companies** using consensus safety and care standards.
- **Support legislation establishing consistent national standards** for utility vegetation management and hazard tree assessment.

Federal Agencies (USFS, DOI, FEMA)

- **Incorporate professional arborist qualifications and TCIA accreditation** into grant requirements and procurement criteria for wildfire mitigation contracts.

- **Recognize ANSI A300 and Z133 standards** as the baseline for federally funded tree care and vegetation management work.

State Lawmakers

- **Include professional tree care in state wildfire action plans** and direct mitigation funding toward qualified vegetation management, not just fire suppression after the fact.
-

TIER II: ACTIVE MONITORING & ENGAGEMENT

These issues require continued engagement and rapid response, particularly as legislative or regulatory opportunities arise.

4. Responsible Pesticide Use & Preemption

WHY IT MATTERS: Tree care professionals rely on EPA-registered pesticides to protect trees, communities, and ecosystems. A patchwork of local bans, often adopted without scientific review, undermines effective pest management and creates regulatory chaos.



KEY STAT: 46 states already have pesticide preemption laws. The House voted 280-142 (bipartisan) to strip pesticide preemption rollback provisions from the 2026 Farm Bill.

TALKING POINTS

- **Tree care professionals rely on EPA-registered pesticides to protect trees, communities, and ecosystems.** These products are rigorously evaluated through a science-based federal process and are essential for managing invasive species, disease, and pest infestations.
- **A patchwork of local bans undermines science-based regulation.** When individual municipalities restrict pesticide use without scientific review, it creates confusion, unequal protection, and can worsen outcomes by allowing infestations to spread. 46 states already recognize state-level preemption.
- **FIFRA was designed as a federal floor not a ceiling.** The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act establishes EPA and state agencies as the entities with scientific expertise to regulate pesticides. Local governments typically lack the technical capacity.
- **This is actively being debated in the Farm Bill.** The House recently voted 280-142 to strip pesticide preemption provisions (Sections 10205-10207) from H.R. 7567. As the Senate takes up its version, TCIA must be at the table.
- **TCIA's position is clear: we support responsible use, not reckless restriction.** We advocate for science-based regulation administered by EPA and state lead agencies; the entities with the expertise to get it right.

THE ASK

Federal Lawmakers

- **Preserve FIFRA's science-based regulatory framework.** Support EPA and state lead agencies as the appropriate authorities, not individual municipalities without scientific review capacity.
- **Oppose provisions in the Farm Bill that would weaken state pesticide preemption.** The House voted bipartisan (280-142) to strip these provisions; the Senate should follow suit.
- **Fund EPA's pesticide registration review process** to ensure timely, science-based evaluations.

State Lawmakers

- **Maintain state preemption of local pesticide regulations** as 46 states already do. A patchwork of municipal bans harms both the environment and professionals trained to protect it.
 - **Consult with industry professionals** including ISA-certified arborists and licensed applicators — before introducing legislation restricting pesticide use.
-

5. Urban & Community Forestry Funding & Standards

WHY IT MATTERS: The USFS Urban and Community Forestry Program is the only federal program dedicated to urban trees and green spaces serving the 84% of Americans who live in urban areas. How this money is spent matters as much as how much is appropriated.



KEY STAT: The program is traditionally funded at just \$36-40 million annually — serving 84% of the U.S. population. A modest investment with outsized returns.

TALKING POINTS

- **The USFS UCF Program is the only federal program dedicated to urban trees and green spaces** — and it serves the 84% of Americans who live in urban areas. Maintaining and growing this funding is essential.
- **It's not just about how much money - it's about how it's spent.** TCIA advocates that federally funded tree planting and maintenance should require certified arborists, accredited companies, and adherence to consensus safety and care standards.
- **Urban trees are infrastructure.** They reduce flooding, lower temperatures, improve air quality, support mental health, and increase property values. Investing in urban forestry is investing in community resilience.
- **The program is traditionally funded at just \$36-40 million annually.** For a program that serves hundreds of millions of Americans, that's a modest investment with outsized returns. Congress should maintain or increase this funding.
- **Quality matters.** Poorly planted or maintained trees become hazards. Requiring professional standards ensures federal investments lead to lasting, safe, healthy urban forests, not liabilities.

THE ASK

Federal Lawmakers

- **Maintain or increase funding for the USFS UCF Program.** At just \$36-40 million annually, this is one of the most cost-effective investments in community health, resilience, and quality of life.
- **Require professional standards for federally funded tree planting and maintenance.** Ensure grants require certified arborists, accredited companies, and ANSI A300 care standards.
- **Support the expansion of urban forestry investments** and ensure continuity of funding regardless of political shifts.

State & Local Officials

- **Invest in municipal urban forestry programs** and prioritize tree maintenance — not just planting. A tree without a maintenance plan is a future liability.
- **Partner with TCIA-accredited companies** for community tree planting initiatives to ensure professional-quality work and long-term canopy health.

6. CDL Flexibility & Drug Testing Reform

WHY IT MATTERS: Tree care companies need CDL-holding drivers to transport heavy equipment safely. Current testing protocols and licensing requirements create unnecessary barriers that worsen the industry's labor shortage without improving safety.



KEY STAT: Current THC tests detect presence, not impairment, disqualifying safe, skilled workers who legally used cannabis off the clock days ago.

TALKING POINTS

- **Tree care companies need CDL-holding drivers to move equipment safely, but the current testing process creates unnecessary barriers.** Streamlining CDL testing and improving employer flexibility would help companies get qualified drivers behind the wheel faster.
- **THC drug testing policies are outdated and costing us good workers.** Current testing detects presence, not impairment, meaning a worker who legally used cannabis off the clock days ago can fail a test. This disqualifies otherwise safe, skilled workers in an already tight labor market.
- **Safety is non-negotiable, but the testing should match the science.** TCIA supports impairment-based testing that accurately reflects whether a worker is fit for duty, not policies that penalize legal off-duty behavior.
- **This is a workforce issue as much as a regulatory one.** In an industry already struggling to fill positions, losing qualified candidates over outdated testing protocols makes the labor shortage worse.

THE ASK

Federal Lawmakers

- **Support legislation that streamlines CDL testing and licensing** for commercial vehicle operators in industries like tree care, where equipment transport is essential.
- **Fund pilot programs for impairment-based testing technologies** that distinguish between active impairment and residual THC presence from legal, off-duty use.
- **Direct DOT and FMCSA to study and modernize drug testing protocols** to reflect the reality that cannabis is now legal in the majority of states.

State Lawmakers

- **Align state CDL requirements with federal minimums** and eliminate unnecessary state-specific add-ons that create barriers for seasonal industries.
- **Support research and adoption of oral-fluid or impairment-based testing** as a fairer, more accurate alternative to urinalysis for THC.

TIER III: EMERGING & HORIZON ISSUES

These issues warrant early tracking and proactive positioning. TCIA should establish thought leadership now to shape outcomes later.

7. State Licensure for Arborists & Tree Care Businesses

WHY IT MATTERS: Growing interest at the state level in arborist and tree care business licensure presents both an opportunity to elevate the profession and a risk of poorly drafted laws that could harm small businesses and fragment standards.



KEY STAT: Multiple states are actively considering or exploring arborist licensure — without consistent industry input, legislators will write the rules without us.

TALKING POINTS

- **Licensure, done right, elevates the entire profession.** It protects consumers from unqualified operators, rewards companies that invest in training and safety, and raises the bar for the industry.
- **But poorly drafted laws can do real harm.** Without industry input, licensure can be overly burdensome, misaligned with professional standards, or create barriers that hurt small businesses. TCIA must be at the table before bills are introduced.
- **Interest is growing at the state level and moving fast.** Multiple states are considering arborist or tree care business licensure. If the industry isn't proactive, legislators will write the rules without us.
- **TCIA is developing a model framework.** Rather than reacting state by state, TCIA is building principles and model language that can guide any state considering licensure, ensuring professionalism without unintended consequences.

THE ASK

State Lawmakers

- **Consult TCIA before drafting licensure legislation.** We have model framework principles and industry expertise that protects consumers and avoids unintended harm to small businesses.
- **Base licensure on nationally recognized credentials** such as ISA Certified Arborist and TCIA Accreditation rather than creating state-specific requirements that fragment the profession.
- **Include grandfather provisions and reasonable timelines** so that existing, experienced operators aren't unfairly penalized during the transition.
- **Ensure licensure applies to all entities performing tree care,** not just arborists, to close the loophole that allows unlicensed, uninsured operators to undercut professionals.

8. Insurance, Drones & Hazard Tree Determinations

WHY IT MATTERS: Insurance companies are increasingly using drone imagery to make hazard tree determinations, often without a professional arborist ever setting foot on site. This raises serious safety, liability, and professional standards concerns.



KEY STAT: NCOIL (National Council of Insurance Legislators) is actively engaged on this issue - meaning model state legislation could emerge and spread quickly.

TALKING POINTS

- **Insurance companies are increasingly using drone imagery to deny or condition property coverage, often without a professional arborist ever setting foot on site.** This raises serious safety and liability concerns.
- **Remote-only assessments can't replace professional judgment.** A drone photo can't evaluate root stability, internal decay, or species-specific risk factors. Hazard tree determinations require trained, on-the-ground expertise.
- **This trend creates new liability for homeowners and tree care companies.** If an insurer flags a tree as hazardous based on aerial imagery and the homeowner doesn't act, who bears the liability? And if the assessment is wrong, who's accountable?
- **NCOIL is already looking at this meaning state legislation could come quickly.** The National Council of Insurance Legislators is engaged, which means model legislation could spread across states. TCIA needs to shape the conversation now.

THE ASK

State Lawmakers & Insurance Regulators

- **Require that hazard tree determinations for insurance underwriting be performed or verified by a certified arborist** not based solely on aerial or drone imagery.
- **Engage with NCOIL** as model legislation develops to ensure standards include professional arborist involvement and due process for homeowners.
- **Establish transparency requirements** so homeowners know the basis for insurance decisions related to trees and have a clear path to appeal.
- **Study the liability implications** of insurer-initiated hazard tree designations; ensure homeowners, arborists, and tree care companies are not unfairly exposed.

9. State-Level Legislative Trends

WHY IT MATTERS: States are increasingly where policy is made first. Labor, licensure, insurance, pesticide, and safety rules that directly impact tree care businesses are being written in state legislatures, often faster than federal action.



KEY STAT: States are often policy testbeds, and multi-state tree care operators need consistency, not a different rulebook in every capitol.

TALKING POINTS

- **States are increasingly where the action is.** Labor, licensure, insurance, pesticide, and safety rules that directly impact tree care businesses are being written in state legislatures, often faster and with more immediate impact than federal policy.
- **A patchwork of state rules creates real challenges for multi-state operators.** Companies working across state lines face different licensing, safety, and insurance requirements in every jurisdiction. Consistent, professional standards benefit everyone.
- **TCIA is building the infrastructure to track and respond.** Through the Quorum platform and grassroots network, TCIA is developing the ability to monitor state legislation in real time and mobilize members when it matters.
- **Members are TCIA's eyes and ears at the state level.** Elected officials are most responsive to local constituents. TCIA members who engage their state legislators are the most powerful tool we have for shaping state policy.

THE ASK

State Lawmakers (All Issues)

- **Invite TCIA to testify or provide written input** on any legislation affecting tree care, vegetation management, pesticide use, licensure, or workforce policy. We bring data, professional standards, and 1,800+ member companies.
- **Visit a TCIA member job site** to see firsthand the skill, risk, and professionalism involved in tree care. A site visit is worth a thousand fact sheets.
- **Join or stay in contact with TCIA's grassroots network** so we can provide timely, relevant industry data when legislation moves in your state.
- **Support consistency across states** on licensure, safety, and labor standards. Multi-state tree care operators need predictability, not a different rulebook in every capitol.

QUICK-REFERENCE SUMMARY

#	Issue	Key Stat / Hook	Lead Ask
1	OSHA Tree Care Standard	Fatality rate up to 11x the national average	Send a letter urging OSHA to publish the NPRM now
2	Workforce & Immigration	H-2B cap unchanged since 1990; 24.5% lottery odds	Co-sponsor H-2B cap reform; make supplemental visas permanent
3	Wildfire & Veg Mgmt	\$7.3B in federal wildfire funding (FY2025)	Require qualified contractors for federal mitigation work
4	Pesticide Preemption	46 states already have preemption laws	Oppose Farm Bill provisions weakening preemption
5	Urban Forestry Funding	\$36-40M/year serving 84% of Americans	Maintain/increase UCF funding; require professional standards
6	CDL / Drug Testing	THC tests detect presence, not impairment	Modernize DOT testing to impairment-based protocols
7	State Licensure	Growing state interest — need proactive engagement	Consult TCIA before drafting; use national credentials
8	Drones / Insurance	NCOIL involvement signals rapid state spread	Require certified arborist verification for hazard tree decisions
9	State Trends	States often act faster than Congress	Invite TCIA to testify; visit a member job site

STAY CONNECTED

- **TCIA Advocacy Action Center:** tcia.quorum.us: Track bills, send messages, take action.
- **Contact:** George Strout, Manager, Grassroots & Political Advocacy - gstrout@tcia.org | (603) 218-1257
- **Website:** tcia.org | treecareindustryassociation.org
- **Report Your Meetings:** Log every interaction on the Action Center so we can track our collective impact.