

# United States Senate

January 8, 2018

The Honorable Stephen T. Ayers  
Architect of the Capitol  
U.S. Capitol SB- 15  
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Mr. Ayers:

On behalf of all Montanans and all visitors of the U.S. Capitol over the past month, I want to extend a warm thank you for ensuring the smooth delivery, lighting and showcasing of the 2017 Capitol Christmas Tree. Now that the holiday season is behind us, I would like to request this celebrated tree be returned home to Montana.

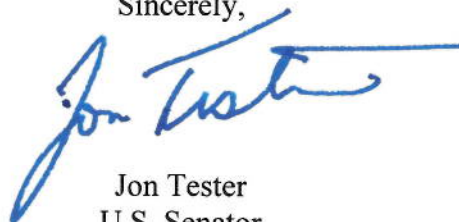
The 79-foot Engelmann Spruce that adorned the Capitol's West Lawn this December grew for decades in Montana. It survived harsh winters and endured brutal wildfire seasons. 2017 will go down as the most devastating wildfire season in Montana's history burning nearly 1.3 million acres.

On August 31, the fast-moving Sprague Fire in Glacier National Park—not far from where the tree was harvested—consumed the historic Sperry Chalet. This wooden and stone landmark, built in Glacier's rugged backcountry more than a century ago, is irreplaceable. But efforts are underway to rebuild the Sperry Chalet, and I can think of no better use for some of the Montana lumber in our Capitol Christmas Tree to assist in that endeavor.

I'd like to see this tree go home to Big Sky Country, where it can continue giving to the people to whom our public lands belong. I understand that generous financial sponsors have already agreed to cover the cost of shipping the Capitol Christmas Tree to the Stoltze Lumber Mill in Columbia Falls, Montana—at the doorstep of Glacier National Park.

Your cooperation in releasing the tree from the Capitol Grounds will expedite this effort, and the people of Montana are grateful for it. Thank you for your consideration and I wish you all the best in this New Year.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester  
U.S. Senator