

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 9, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland  
Secretary  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
United States Department of  
Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Lloyd Austin  
Secretary  
United States Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC, 20301-1000

Dear Secretaries Haaland, Vilsack, Buttigieg and Austin:

We write concerning the reported shortages of jet fuel impacting wildland firefighting. With wildfires currently burning in the West, we strongly urge your departments to coordinate and develop strategies to combat any fuel shortages that would prevent the deployment of aircrafts for aerial firefighting purposes.

As you are well aware, the 2020 wildfire season was one of the most destructive seasons on record; destroying thousands of homes, burning millions acres, and straining communities already battling a historic pandemic. In 2021, there are already over 108 large fires burning in 15 states and the need for an aerial response to fight these fires is a critical and much-needed tool. We are concerned that fuel shortages could lead to the grounding of federal, state, and contracted aircrafts and hurt the ability for initial fire attack and further devastate communities near the growing number of wildfires. By August 23, please respond to the following questions that will help our states prepare for the remainder of the 2021 wildfire season:

- What plans are currently in place to address fuel shortages for aerial wildfire efforts?
- How will your Departments coordinate a response if a fuel shortage occurs while multiple wildfires are burning across multiple states?
- Are there enough available personnel to transport fuel to needed locations? If not, how will you increase qualified personnel?
- What are the steps to expedite the ability for non-federal entities to purchase jet fuel to support aerial firefighting?
- What steps do you take in the contracting process to ensure that contractors have access to an adequate and reliable supply of fuel?

The importance of a strategic and integrated approach to tackle wildfire is essential, and we urge your continued partnerships and coordination with state and local firefighting response units. We also urge strong coordination with the White House for the duration of the wildfire season to ensure prompt access to the needed resources when they are available. We stand ready to support wildfire prevention, response, and recovery for the citizens across the West.

Sincerely,



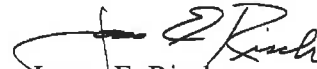
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator