

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 24, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We urge you to grant Governor Tina Kotek's formal request for a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Oregon, in response to record-setting wildfires and severe storms. Specifically, we request that your administration coordinate with the Governor's office to ensure that State, Local, and Tribal governments have access to all the federal resources available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance. We also ask that your administration provide full and fair consideration for Oregon's request through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and waive the state's cost-share due to a lack of available funding.

The 2024 wildfire season has been one of the most devastating and costly fire seasons on record. Central and eastern Oregon experienced intense heat waves this summer, which dried out vegetation and created extreme fire risk on the landscape. Severe lightning storms ignited a large number of fires, and windy conditions allowed many of these fires to spread rapidly. Over 1.9 million acres burned, making it the largest wildfire season by acreage in Oregon's history. For context, the state's 10-year average acres burned is 640,000 acres. The estimated damages and cost to public infrastructure exceeds \$650 million, and this figure does not account for the long-term loss in revenue local businesses will experience as a result of these fires.

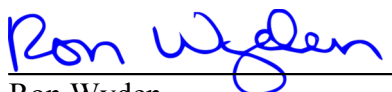
This year's extreme infernos and microburst storm events most acutely affected six Oregon counties--Gilliam, Grant, Jefferson, Umatilla, Wasco, and Wheeler. The fires destroyed 42 homes and 132 additional buildings and structures, damaged critical infrastructure and the natural environment, interrupted schools, care facilities, and social services, injured 26 civilians and fire responders, and led to the death of an air tanker pilot. These fires have also created profound hardship for our ranchers, as they destroyed private and public grazing lands and cut off access to essential resources for livestock.

Governor Kotek declared a statewide emergency from July 12 through October 1, 2024, to mobilize emergency response across rural central and eastern Oregon. First responders have worked around the clock to keep countless families safe over the last few months. They have

engaged in missions to suppress fires and provide immediate resources to affected communities, including shelter, food assistance, and emergency financial aid. These challenging efforts occurred despite the lack of cell towers and high-speed internet, road closures from debris, limited visibility due to smoke, and power outages as residents were evacuated from their homes.

Oregonians now require federal support and assistance to navigate the aftermath of this unprecedented fire season. The back-to-back incidents and lack of basic services had a devastating effect on the safety and stamina of our fire crews. We urge you and your administration to swiftly provide the federal resources for our communities to recover and rebuild.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



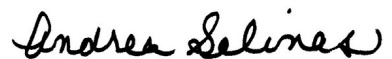
Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Member of Congress