

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 26, 2025

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Secretary Rollins and President Trump:

We write to express our deep concern regarding the recent decision to lay off thousands of employees from the U.S. Forest Service and the potentially catastrophic consequences this will have on wildfire prevention efforts across the country. These cuts, compounded by the decision to freeze federal funding for a long list of critical programs and grants, could leave our public lands more vulnerable than ever to the threat of wildfires, which are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change.

Last month, Southern California experienced the most catastrophic wildfires in its history. Since January 7, a series of wildfires have ravaged Los Angeles County, consuming 55,082 acres due to strong Santa Ana winds and severe dry conditions. The Palisades and Eaton Fires were the most destructive, burning more than 23,400 and more than 14,000 acres, respectively. To date, the fires have claimed at least 28 lives and destroyed over 16,240 structures.

Sadly, these fires are part of a larger pattern – wildfires are becoming more frequent and more severe. For instance, last year, Oregon saw more acreage burn than in any year in the state's history, at approximately 2 million acres. This comes just 4 years after the devastating 2020 Labor Day wildfires. This event resulted from a severe windstorm that led to 5 large fires burning over 100,000 acres each, in addition to at least 12 other smaller fires, tearing across the state. Tragically, the Labor Day wildfires took 9 lives and burned approximately 1,000,000 total acres.

These tragedies underscore the urgent need for ongoing community risk reduction and wildfire mitigation strategies that the U.S. Forest Service is tasked with carrying out. The recent layoffs at U.S. Forest Service, which reportedly amount to 10 percent of its entire workforce, directly jeopardize this critical work. For example, in the weeks before the recent Southern California wildfires began, the agency ordered and positioned multiple hand crews, engines, water tenders, dozers and patrols strategically throughout the Angeles National Forest in preparation for critical fire weather. These resources were essential to Initial Attack on fire starts and the overall response to major fires across the region.

Southern California is a prime example of how ecosystem restoration and science-based forest management work can be critical to reducing wildfire risk. Since 2023, thanks to investments included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the U.S. Forest Service and its partners have treated over 50,000 acres across the Southern California Fireshed Risk Reduction Strategy Landscape. The agency has also obligated over \$46 million in funding included in IIJA and IRA across the four southern California National Forests including the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino National Forests as part of the Forest Service's larger Wildfire Crisis Strategy. The U.S. Forest Service is conducting this kind of critical work across the country. In 2024 alone, the agency treated upwards of 70,000 acres across Oregon's fireshed landscapes as part of over 800,000 total acres across the United States. Halting or delaying these projects risks undermining the progress we've made to ensure the safety and well-being of our communities.

The loss of skilled employees, many of whom possess specialized training in modern wildfire prevention techniques, will have lasting effects on the U.S. Forest Service's ability to respond to the growing threat of wildfires. It is particularly concerning that many of those laid off were probationary employees who were actively involved in these critical projects. Their departure, along with the broader staff reductions, leaves the agency dangerously understaffed as we head into another wildfire season.

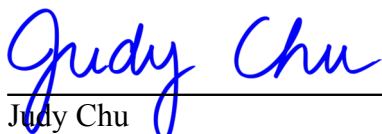
Given the recent devastation in Southern California and the broader wildfire crisis affecting our country we are requesting responses to the following questions regarding how your administration plans to address these challenges moving forward:

1. How many U.S. Forest Service employees have been terminated since January 20, 2025? Please include each terminated employee's job title, reason(s) for termination provided to the employee, their occupational categories as determined by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, their station of duty, and the USFS region in which their duty station resided?
2. What specific steps will you take to restore critical wildfire mitigation programs that have been disrupted by these terminations and the freeze on funding?
3. How do you intend to support the efforts of the Forest Service and other federal agencies tasked with managing our public lands as they face the growing challenges posed by climate change and the escalating risk of catastrophic wildfire?
4. In light of the recent Southern California wildfires, which demonstrated the urgent need for proactive wildfire risk mitigation, how will you prioritize funding for community-based risk reductions efforts in the coming year?
5. How will your department ensure that the billions of dollars allocated in IJIA and IRA for wildfire prevention and firefighter support are fully utilized to protect communities from the growing threat of wildfires?

We urge you to reconsider these cuts and to ensure that U.S. Forest Service and other agencies are fully equipped to handle the current moment. Our nation's public lands and surrounding communities deserve the attention, resources, and leadership required to safeguard them for future generations.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to your response.

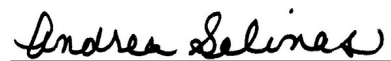
Sincerely,



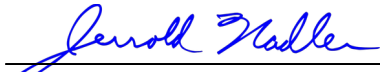
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



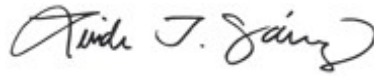
Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress  
Ranking Member, House Natural  
Resources Committee



Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress



Terrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



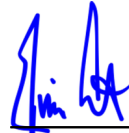
John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



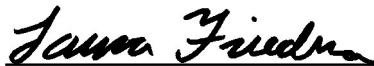
Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress



Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman  
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette  
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Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



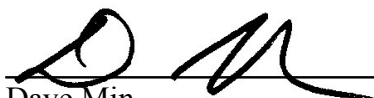
Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



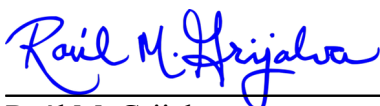
Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



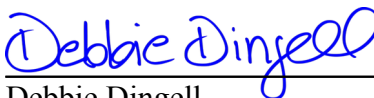
Dave Min  
Member of Congress



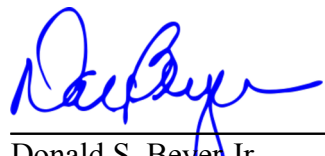
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress



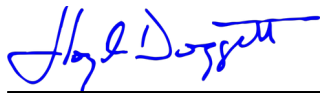
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



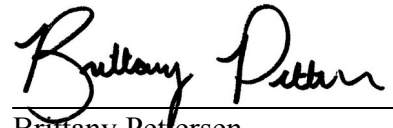
Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



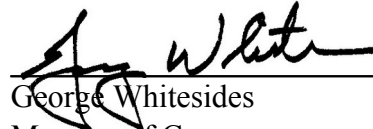
Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari  
Member of Congress



George Whitesides  
Member of Congress



Luz M. Rivas  
Member of Congress



Ed Case  
Member of Congress



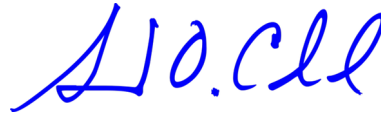
Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle  
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter  
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal  
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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



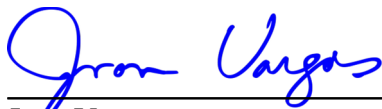
Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



Derek T. Tran  
Member of Congress



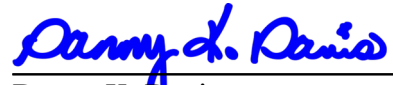
Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



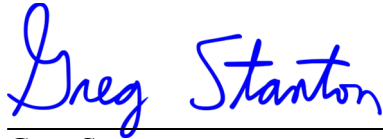
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
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Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



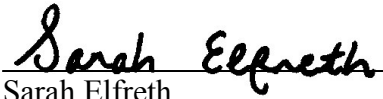
LaMonica McIver  
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Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfreth  
Member of Congress



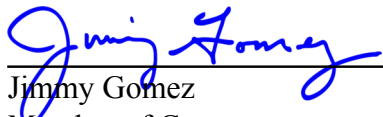
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda  
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



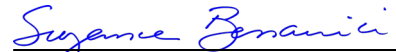
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



Cleo Fields  
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



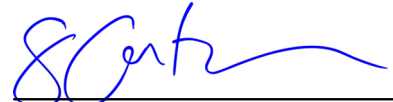
Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



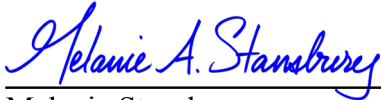
Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



Mike Levin  
Member of Congress



Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



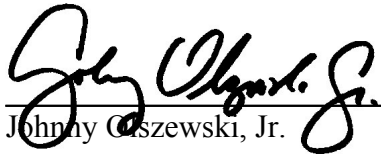
Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



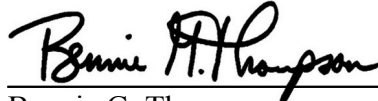
Bill Foster  
Member of Congress



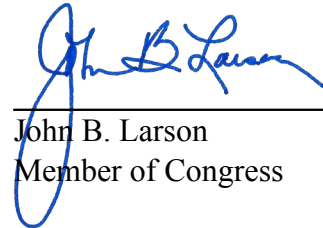
Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



Johnny Oszewski, Jr.  
Member of Congress



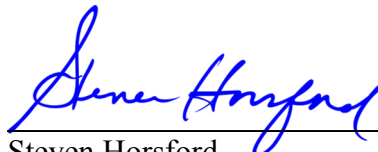
Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



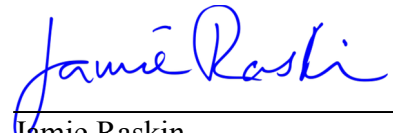
John B. Larson  
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress  
Nevada's Fourth Congressional  
District



Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



Janelle S. Bynum  
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernandez  
Member of Congress