

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 10, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We strongly support California Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s request for a Major Disaster declaration for the State of California in response to the wildfires that have severely impacted the counties of Butte, Lake, Napa, Nevada, Mendocino, Sonoma, and Yuba on October 9, 2017. In order to help the affected communities and individuals rebuild as soon as possible, we ask that you expedite the damage assessment reviews necessary to make federal assistance available under Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), including Individual and Public Assistance for the 7 California counties most affected by the wildfires, and any other appropriate federal assistance.

More than 18 wildfires are currently active throughout Northern California and have collectively burned nearly 90,000 acres over the past two days. Extreme winds and weather conditions caused the fires to grow uncontrollably and become extremely difficult to contain for firefighters. Initial estimates report that 1,500 homes and structures were destroyed in the first 24 hours, and more than 20,000 residents were forced to evacuate and seek temporary shelter, some with little time to flee. Tragically, this catastrophe has already claimed the lives of 11 people. State agencies expect that the fires could further escalate but are grateful for the support they have received thus far from federal agencies, particularly the U.S. Forest Service and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This initial assistance has been critical in combating these wildfires and protecting public safety.

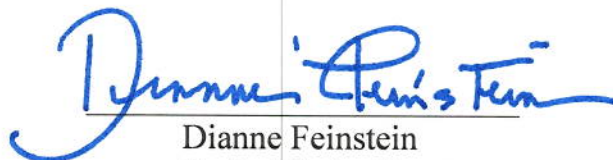
The destruction caused by wildfires has grown more extreme and more frequent in the past decade. The fires currently devastating California underscore the need to ensure that additional attention, and federal resources, can be brought to bear in both preventing and fighting wildfires. Therefore, it is essential that we fix the way the federal government budgets for wildfire once and for all, and we urge you to support efforts in Congress to pass such a budget fix as quickly as possible without extraneous policy riders.

Governor Brown has determined that the severity of the wildfires is beyond the State's capabilities, and we appreciate your swift response in issuing a major disaster declaration. We urge you to direct federal agencies to assess the damage and begin disbursing individual and public assistance as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely,



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator