

United States Senate

September 8, 2020

Senator Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer,

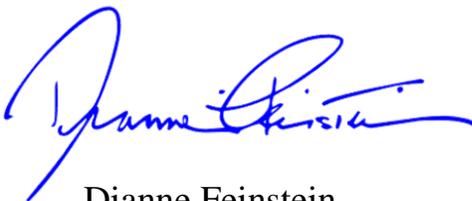
Given the severe wildfires threatening California, Montana, and many parts of the Western United States, we write to ask for your assistance to ensure that our bipartisan “Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020” (S. 4431) is approved by the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and passed by the full Senate as soon as possible.

Many states across the West are currently experiencing severe wildfires, which have only been exacerbated by climate change, mismanaged forests, and the challenges posed by the pandemic. In California, record-breaking heat and nearly 14,000 lightning strikes have caused more than 700 fires statewide. More than 1.6 million acres (larger than the State of Delaware) have burned, with over 1,500 homes destroyed and 8 deaths. In Montana, wildfires have already burned over three times the amount of acreage in 2019 and two Montanans have been killed fighting fires this year. More fires are likely as we move into the historic wildfire season with high temperatures, dry conditions, and strong winds.

Our bill would provide federal agencies with new tools to reduce hazardous fuels, protect communities, and support forestry jobs, biomass development, and smarter energy practices. This bill is the result of over one year of extensive deliberation, stakeholder engagement, and outreach across party lines to ensure a truly bipartisan, pragmatic approach to reduce the risk of wildfire.

If we don’t take strong action now, we worry that what’s happening to California and Montana will soon become the new normal in every state in the West. We urge you to help us pass this important, bipartisan piece of legislation as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator