

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 29, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC. 20250

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Haaland:

Congratulations on your appointments. We look forward to working with you on the serious challenges California is facing on climate change and the environment. We write to you today to request that your agencies transition to a year round wildland fire workforce, which should include reclassifying more seasonal federal firefighter positions as permanent positions. We ask that you let us know if you need additional resources to fulfill this request.

As California and the West continue to contend with historic and destructive wildfire seasons, it has become clear that we are entering a “new normal” in which increasingly intense wildfires wreak havoc during a nearly year-round fire season. Last year, California had over 9,900 wildfires, which burned a record-setting 4.25 million acres, killed 33 people, and destroyed nearly 10,500 homes and structures. And this year, we are already well above average for both the number of fires and acres burned. Because the federal government owns 57% of the forest land in California, and climate change all but ensures an ever-expanding fire season in the years to come, we must begin to adapt our federal resources to better align with needs on the ground.

Transitioning to a larger, full-time workforce would add immediate capacity to fight wildfires and conduct prevention work nationwide, allow for greater flexibility in shifting personnel between regions when needed, support increased staff capacity to perform actions outside of the fire season that reduce fire risk, provide more stable work opportunities and employee benefits, increase employee retention, and reduce agency costs and burdens associated with the seasonal hiring process.

We appreciate your attention to our request, and stand ready to help however we can.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Scott Peters
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



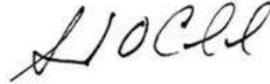
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



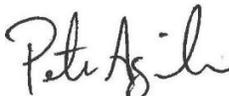
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress