

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 14, 2018

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1100 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

The Honorable Heather Wilson
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary Mattis and Secretary Wilson:

Given the increasing threat wildfires pose to California, we urge you to comply with the recently enacted *2019 National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) and retrofit C-130s for firefighting purposes as quickly as possible.

After five years of drought, California faces increasingly devastating wildfires. Last year, over 1.2 million acres of state, federal, and private property burned, 46 people were killed, and more than 10,800 structures were destroyed. So far this year, over 900,000 acres have already burned, larger than the entire State of Rhode Island, and more than double the acreage that had burned by this time last year. Sadly, thirteen people have died this year, and more than 1,100 homes have been lost. We fear annual losses will only get worse each year as climate conditions turn fire “seasons” into year-round threats.

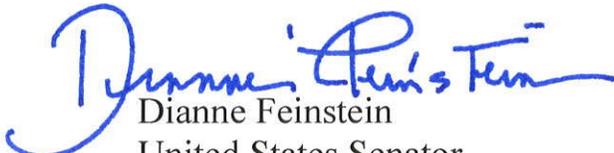
The Air Force was initially directed by *the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act* (Sec. 1098) to modify seven Coast Guard HC-130H aircraft with state-of-the-art wildfire suppression equipment for use by the Forest Service. The Forest Service subsequently decided it would be cost-prohibitive for them to own and operate these firefighting assets. In response, the 2019 NDAA (Sec. 1083) now requires the planes to be fully retrofitted and transferred to the State of California for use by CalFire to fight wildfires.

Current law states that the Department of Defense “shall make transfers as necessary to supplement accounts of the Department of the Air Force to perform the HC-130H modifications” and requires the Secretary of the Air Force to carry out those modifications. In order to protect lives and property as soon as possible, we urge you to immediately identify and obligate any available funds – as required by the law – to begin the aircraft modifications.

These firefighting aircraft are absolutely vital to California’s efforts to combat the increasingly deadly wildfires that threaten our constituents. We urge you to comply with the law as expeditiously as possible, and we ask that you provide us

with regular updates as the planes are being modified and transferred to the State of California.

Sincerely,


Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator


Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader


Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator


Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader


Ken Calvert
Member of Congress


Mike Thompson
Member of Congress


Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress


John Garamendi
Member of Congress


Jared Huffman
Member of Congress


Tom McClintock
Member of Congress