



## United States Senate

November 19, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Deb Haaland  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Kiran Ahuja  
Director  
Office of Personnel Management  
1900 E Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20415

Dear Secretaries Vilsack and Haaland and Director Ahuja,

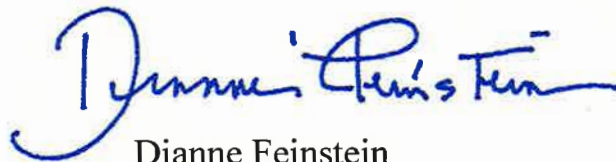
The recently enacted *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* includes \$600 million for wildland firefighters. I urge your rapid obligation of these funds to achieve two critical goals by the 2022 fire season: 1) reduce as much as possible the pay disparity between federal wildland firefighters and their state and local counterparts, and 2) hire and train an adequate number of wildland firefighters to combat the increasingly frequent and catastrophic wildfires in the West.

As you know, there is an urgent need to implement these provisions by the 2022 fire season. Eight of California's largest wildfires on record have occurred in the past five years. During that timeframe, 10 million acres have burned, at least 183 people have died, and more than 32,000 homes have been destroyed. Until the passage of this critical law, we have not sufficiently funded federal wildfire fighting efforts to address these fires. While California state firefighters have a starting salary of more than \$60,000 a year, federal wildland firefighters doing the same work make just \$30,000. This disparity has led to a shortage of federal wildland firefighters, approximately 730 unfilled positions this August, which is especially problematic as the federal government manages nearly 58 percent of the California's forest land.

The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* includes provisions to provide critical funding for wildland firefighters, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that these elements are implemented as quickly as possible. Specifically, the law will raise federal wildland firefighter salaries by as much as \$20,000 per year and convert 1,000 seasonal firefighter positions to permanent. The Act also requires federal agencies to create an occupational series for wildland firefighters that should help to improve recruitment efforts and morale among this critical cadre.

Given the urgency of the fire situation in the Western United States, I would appreciate if you could provide quarterly updates on your progress toward achieving the goals I outlined above for 2022. Thank you for considering this request, and I look forward to working together to support our wildland firefighters to defend the West from future catastrophic wildfire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dianne Feinstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

DF:mr