

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 16, 2026

Robert J. Fenton, Jr.
Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Mr. Fenton:

Wildfires are one of the most frequently recurring disasters that, while once common only to western states, have recently become a major threat to communities across the country. The Canadian wildfires in 2023 and 2024 produced smoke and harmful air pollutants that were dispersed across the eastern United States. In 2024 and 2025, the Cottonwood Peak wildfire in Nevada, the Smokehouse Creek wildfire in Texas and Oklahoma, and the Los Angeles wildfires in California burned millions of acres across the west. 2024 also proved to be the worst wildfire season in Oregon, and in 2026, Georgia faced the most destructive fire in the state's history. These wildfires can be lethal and destroy critical infrastructure and entire residential communities, negatively affect public health through harmful smoke and air pollutants, and place large economic burdens on urban and rural communities.

Unfortunately, over 3.1 million acres have already burned across the country since the beginning of this year, which is the second largest number of acres burned in a January to July period in the past 10 years. According to the National Interagency Fire Center's July National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook report, western and southeastern states are forecasted to experience above normal wildfire activity this summer as major drought conditions continue to persist. Given these recent fires, the persistent drought across multiple states, and the expected above normal wildfire activity, it is imperative that FEMA helps communities quickly respond to wildfires and increase their resilience to future wildfire disasters.

Fortunately, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAGs) to help communities manage and control wildfire disasters. There were 67 FMAG declarations in fiscal year 2025 alone, which shows how valuable these grants are to helping communities combat wildfires. Therefore, FMAGs must continue to be available to all communities, especially for rural communities, as we prepare to enter the upcoming wildfire season.

Communities can also increase their resilience after a wildfire disaster by participating in FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Post Fire (HMGP Post Fire) for FMAG declarations, which helps develop hazard mitigation plans and rebuild in ways that reduce future disaster impacts. For example, in Nevada, HMGP Post Fire grants are primarily used for hazardous fuels

mitigation in and around their communities with the intent of decreasing future wildland fire effects. However, we are very concerned that many states in 2025 and 2026 were not awarded HMGP Post Fire funding after an FMAG declaration. In fact, since March 18, 2025, HMGP has not been approved for any major disaster declaration. Additionally, a leaked memo from FEMA to the Office of Management and Budget from April 2025 suggested not automatically approving HMGP, and the recently released FEMA Review Council Report recommends replacing HMGP with a two-phase funding structure. These actions make the future of HMGP uncertain and leave communities without access to this critical funding.

As we approach the summer months and prepare for above normal wildfire activity, we urge you to ensure FEMA can quickly respond to future wildfires and that FMAG and HMGP Post Fire funds are promptly approved and distributed to communities, including those in rural areas. We appreciate that FEMA recently started dispersing some HMGP funds to projects that were approved as far back as 2020. However, while addressing the backlog of HMGP projects is important, we urge you to ensure that more recent HMGP and HMGP Post Fire requests are also promptly reviewed and funds disbursed so that communities can prepare for future disasters. In addition, we request responses to the following questions by no later than July 31, 2026:

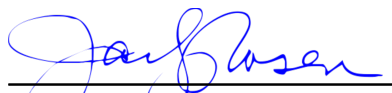
1. How does FEMA plan to ensure that it can promptly review and approve FMAG funds to provide vital assistance to communities during the upcoming wildfire season? Does FEMA's plan include the recommendations provided by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) regarding FMAG implementation, many of which FEMA concurred with and committed to finalizing?
2. Rural communities are no stranger to large and catastrophic wildland fires that place large economic impacts on local industries, but rural communities are rarely eligible for these programs because of low population densities. Considering that wildfires often start in rural areas and then expand into areas with higher population densities, mitigation efforts in rural areas may help protect the higher populated areas. How is FEMA addressing any potential eligibility barriers that impact rural communities and may prevent them from accessing FMAG assistance?
3. From March 2025 to June 2026, how many HMGP requests did President Trump or the FEMA Administrator approve or deny? For requests that were denied, what were the reasons?
4. From March 2025 to June 2026, how many HMGP Post Fire requests did FEMA or FEMA Regional Administrators approve or deny, and for what reasons were these decisions made? Are FEMA Regional Administrators still empowered to approve HMGP Post Fire grants?
5. General feedback from state and local entities is that HMGP Post Fire, while amazing in concept, is rarely used because it is known to be an extremely cumbersome and

bureaucratic process with limited and lengthy results. With this perception in mind, how many FMAGs have been approved since 2020 without a corresponding HMGP Post Fire application submitted?

6. Many state and local agencies have waited multiple years for approval to start work, and multiple years for reimbursement for work approved and performed under HMGP Post Fire. From January 2020 to June 2026, what is the total dollar amount of HMGP Post Fire funds waiting to be reimbursed to state agencies?
7. What has caused or is causing FEMA to delay or not disperse HMGP and HMGP Post Fire funds, and how are these issues being addressed? Does FEMA plan to include the GAO's recommendation to provide assistance for immediate post-wildfire mitigation, which is necessary to prevent post-wildfire flooding, erosion, and debris flows?
8. Has the policy or practice for approving HMGP and HMGP Post Fire requests changed at all in the past 18 months? If so, please provide justification for the changes.
9. With HMGP's future seemingly uncertain, what are FEMA's plans for this program and how will the agency keep Congress informed on its status?

We look forward to your swift response and working with FEMA to ensure the safety of all Americans from wildfire disasters. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

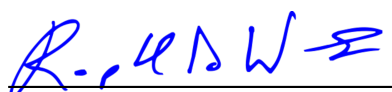
Sincerely,



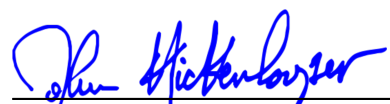
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



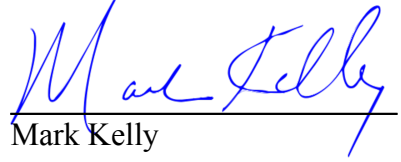
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



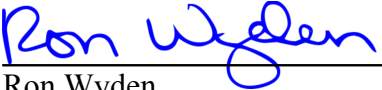
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator