

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 17, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write in support Governor Jay Inslee's September 16, 2020 request for a declaration of a Major Disaster for the State of Washington and authorization of the Individual Assistance Program and Public Assistance Program, Category B, emergency protective measures including congregate/non-congregate sheltering for Whitman County.

As you know, Washington state is experiencing an unprecedented wildfire season. These disasters have stretched our state's wildfire-fighting resources thin and have further devastated communities impacted by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Beginning September 6, 2020, 39 new wildfire starts burned approximately 330,000 acres in the state. This total is more than double the amount of acreage burned in the state last year. In the five-day period between September 7 and 11, an estimated 626,982 acres burned in Washington, which is more acres burned than each of the fire seasons from 2002 to 2019, excluding the devastating 2015 wildfire season. These wildfires have forced the evacuations of thousands of people, threatened 3,000 homes and structures, and deteriorated air quality to hazardous levels. Even more concerning, these numbers are expected to grow as wildfires are still wreaking havoc on our state and acreage burned is approaching levels seen in 2015.

In particular, the town of Malden, a small, rural community in Whitman County, has seen their community reduced to ashes. An estimated 80 percent of homes and other structures in the town including the town's only post office, town hall, fire station, food bank, and library have been destroyed or seriously damaged. Individual and Public Assistance for this town would provide critical support, particularly for eligible individuals who have evacuated and are unable to return to their community.

Therefore, we fully support Governor Inslee's request for a major disaster declaration statewide as well as Public Assistance and Individual Assistance for Whitman County. Further, with major fires continuing to burn across the state, we fully support any subsequent modifications made by Governor Inslee to extend federal assistance to areas not originally included in this request.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



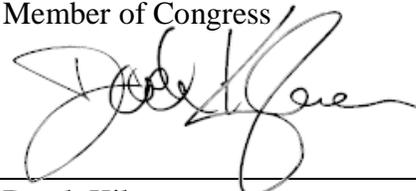
Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Denny Heck
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress