



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Republican Caucus

August 2, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

On behalf of the Oregon House Republicans, we extend our full support for Governor Tina Kotek's urgent request for USDA wildfire disaster assistance. Oregon is currently grappling with severe wildfires that have ravaged our communities, working lands, and natural resources. The scale and intensity of these fires demand immediate federal intervention to aid in our state's recovery efforts.

We strongly support Governor Kotek's requests for the following:

- **Secretarial Disaster Designation:** The designation of a Secretarial Disaster for multiple Oregon counties is crucial to expedite the delivery of much-needed federal assistance. This includes access to various USDA-administered programs such as the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Emergency Haying and Grazing, Emergency Assistance for Livestock (ELAP), and others. These programs will provide vital resources to help our agricultural community rebuild and recover from the devastating impacts of the wildfires.
- **Federal Lands Grazing Permits:** We endorse the request for emergency use authorizations for alternative grazing areas and flexibility in grazing schedules. Our livestock ranchers play a critical role in land stewardship, and these measures will offer necessary relief to sustain their operations and support the recovery of our National Forest System lands.
- **Weed-Free Forage:** The emergency waiver for the use of non-certified weed-free forage is essential for soil stabilization and livestock feeding. The control of invasive species and noxious weeds remains a priority, and this waiver will ensure that local forage can be utilized effectively to mitigate further environmental damage.

Our state is in a state of emergency, with over 120 active fires, including five mega fires, and more than 1,076,000 acres burned. The Durkee Fire in eastern Oregon, now the

largest and highest priority wildfire in the United States, exemplifies the dire situation we face. The requested assistance will be instrumental in addressing the immediate needs of our affected communities and supporting long-term recovery efforts.

We urge the USDA to act swiftly and favorably on these requests. The collaborative efforts of federal, state, and local agencies are vital to overcoming this crisis. We are committed to working alongside the USDA and Governor Kotek to ensure that Oregon's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities receive the support they need during this challenging time.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. We look forward to continued partnership with the USDA in our shared mission to restore and assist our rural communities.

Sincerely,




Jeff Helfrich
House Republican Leader



Court Boice
State Representative, District 1



Dwayne Yunker
State Representative, District 3



Boomer Wright
State Representative, District 9



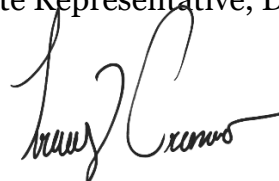
Jami Cate
State Representative, District 11



Ed Diehl
State Representative, District 17



Rick Lewis
State Representative, District 18



Tracy Cramer
State Representative, District 22



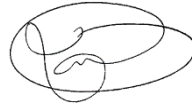
Anna Scharf
State Representative, District 23



Lucetta Elmer
State Representative, District 24



James Hieb
State Representative, District 51



Emily McIntire
State Representative, District 56



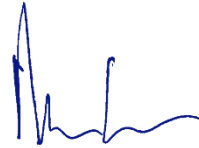
Greg Smith
State Representative, District 57



Bobby Levy
State Representative, District 58



Vikki Breese-Iverson
State Representative, District 59



Mark Owens
State Representative, District 60