

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 28, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

We urge you expedite negotiations on a robust COVID-19 emergency response package that provides the necessary support for state and local governments to effectively prepare and respond to natural disasters—as well as measures to secure the safety of firefighters and first responders on the frontlines of these extreme weather events.

As our nation confronts the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic—from losing a family member or a job—Americans are also dealing with deadly natural disasters. In California alone, the state is currently battling dozens of wildfires that are threatening the loss of life and property. Governor Gavin Newsom declared a statewide emergency on August 18, 2020.

However, it is imperative to take a whole-of-government approach to disaster response in order to protect the life and property of all Americans. By ensuring sufficient funding is made available through the Assistance to Firefighter Grants (AFG), the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants, and Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG), Congress can make certain that state and local governments have the necessary resources to combat these threats.

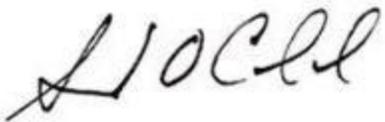
The AFG program provides federal grants directly to local fire departments to help address a variety of equipment, training, and other firefighter-related needs. It also supports fire prevention projects and firefighter health and safety research. The SAFER grant program helps maintain our local fire departments' staffing levels by providing funding for hiring, recruiting, and retraining firefighters. Similarly, the EMPG program provides federal assistance to state and local governments to prepare and coordinate a comprehensive hazard emergency preparedness system.

Our communities desperately need this assistance now. Many state and local governments have been facing budget shortfalls due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. As a result, local governments are being forced to consider drastic cuts to essential public safety jobs. Already, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that state and local governments have laid off 1.2 million government workers between March and June, with many of these job losses as a result of COVID-19 revenue shortfalls.

During this pandemic, many of our first responders have put the safety of the American public first, at a great personal risk to their health. It is long overdue that Congress pass the necessary aid to ensure they can do their job.

Please do not hesitate to contact our office should you have any questions. We stand ready to provide any assistance in this critical matter.

Sincerely,



SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress



DOUG LAMALFA
Member of Congress

JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress

HARLEY ROUDA
Member of Congress

RO KHANNA
Member of Congress

ALAN LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress

JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress

JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress

JERRY McNERNEY
Member of Congress

TONY CÁRDENAS
Member of Congress

JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

MIKE GARCIA
Member of Congress

JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress

TED W. LIEU
Member of Congress

LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ
Member of Congress

JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

KATIE PORTER
Member of Congress

JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress

PAUL COOK
Member of Congress