



October 30, 2024
The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,
NW Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the House Republican Caucus, we write to express our strong support for Governor Tina Kotek's request for a federal major disaster declaration for the State of Oregon following one of the most devastating wildfire seasons in our state's history.

The 2024 wildfire season has had an unprecedented impact on our rural communities, with a staggering 1.9 million acres burned – nearly triple our state's 10-year average of 640,000 acres. Six counties – Gilliam, Grant, Jefferson, Umatilla, Wasco, and Wheeler – have experienced severe infrastructure damage to the electrical grid, resulting in widespread power, communication, and internet outages that have severely disrupted emergency response capabilities and essential services.

The impact on our communities has been profound:

- 42 homes and 132 other structures destroyed
- Critical transportation infrastructure severely compromised
- Extensive damage to utility systems
- Significant disruption to social services
- Devastating effects on Eastern Oregon ranchers, including loss of access to vital resources for livestock
- Disrupted or unavailable mass sheltering for medically fragile, older adults, and isolated individuals

Our emergency response teams have worked tirelessly, with Governor Kotek invoking the Emergency Conflagration Act a record 17 times to mobilize structural firefighting resources. The Oregon Department of Forestry has deployed thousands of wildland firefighting personnel across affected areas. However, given the history making severity of these wildfires, this is not enough.

The requested federal assistance through FEMA's Public Assistance Program is crucial for our rural communities' recovery. These counties have limited resources to support the standard cost-share requirements, and the scale of this disaster has stretched state funding beyond its capacity

to adequately reimburse these communities. The magnitude of this disaster, combined with the limited resources of our rural counties, makes federal assistance absolutely essential for recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

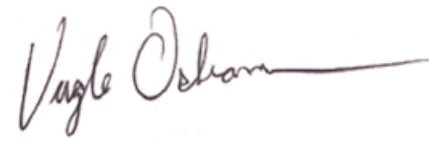
Respectfully,



Jeff Helfrich
House Republican Leader



Court Boice
State Representative, House District 1



Virgle Osborne
State Representative, District 2



Dwayne Yunker
State Representative, District 3



Christine Goodwin
State Representative, District 4



Kim Wallan
State Representative, District 6



Boomer Wright
State Representative, District 9



Jami Cate
State Representative, District 11



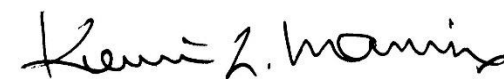
Shelly Boshart Davis
State Representative, District 15



Ed Diehl
State Representative, District 17



Rick Lewis
State Representative, District 18



Kevin Mannix
State Representative, District 21



Tracy Cramer
State Representative, District 22



Anna Scharf
State Representative, District 23



Lucetta Elmer
State Representative, District 24



Brian Stout
State Representative, District 31



Cyrus Javadi
State Representative, District 32



James Hieb
State Representative, District 51



E. Werner Reschke
State Representative, District 55



Emily McIntire
State Representative, District 56



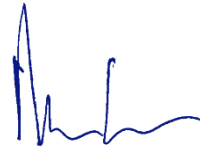
Greg Smith
State Representative, District 57



Bobby Levy
State Representative, District 58



Vikki Breese-Iverson
State Representative, District 59



Mark Owens
State Representative, District 60