

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

[[DATE]]

The Honorable Mike Rogers

Chairman

House Armed Services Committee

2469 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith

Ranking Member

House Armed Services Committee

2264 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Johnson

Speaker

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries

Minority Leader

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries,

This year has marked a devastating fire season across the country. By October, roughly 62,700 fires have burned through more than 9 million acres, which is 135% of the 10-year average. The United States was classified at “preparedness level 5” – the highest level – for 48 consecutive days. As of the delivery of this letter, there are 4,093 firefighters and support personnel assigned to catastrophic incidents around the country. The cost of further inaction has become untenable.

This wildfire crisis is a significant – and growing – hazard to our military readiness and national security, endangering the safety of the American people, as well as the National Guard, Reserve forces, and other servicemen across the country. **We, as members seeking a comprehensive solution to this threat, write in strong support of including the Fix Our Forests Act (FOFA), in the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) or any other moving vehicle, to ensure it becomes law by the end of this Congress.**

In August, several wildfires in eastern Washington state – near Fairchild Air Force Base – forced the evacuation of 60,000 people and destroyed 600 homes. In September, the Bunker Fire burned near one of our key military production hubs, threatening the weapons and munitions produced at Camden's Highland Industrial Park in Arkansas. Wildfire does not even have to directly encroach on installations to have implications for our military: between 2017 and 2021, the National Guard's man-hours spent fighting wildfires grew more than tenfold.

This crisis is also making life more expensive for Americans—the total costs of wildfires in the United States range between nearly \$400 billion to almost \$900 billion annually. These costs stem from damage to critical energy and communication infrastructure, damage to private property, and the costs of evacuation, reconstruction, and post-fire rehabilitation. For the federal government, the ten-year average of fire suppression costs is over \$2.5 billion and growing.

Wildfire mitigation before disaster strikes can help avoid the consequences of severe megafires, at a cost savings of \$3.75 in prevented damages for every \$1 spent. The Fix Our Forests Act

represents our best chance to realize those savings while improving forest health, streamlining wildfire mitigation, and defending communities across the country.

The Fix Our Forests Act is the only package that is bipartisan, bicameral, and has undergone a comprehensive committee process in both chambers of Congress. It represents thoughtful legislation that will meaningfully address the wildfire crisis.

We appreciate your leadership and attention to this matter, and we respectfully reiterate our request for the inclusion of this critical legislation in the Fiscal Year 2027 NDAA, or any other moving vehicle, so it becomes law this Congress; the wildfire crisis cannot wait.

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