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## UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**September 5, 2017**

**The Honorable Paul Ryan**  
**Speaker**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

**The Honorable Nancy Pelosi**  
**Democratic Leader**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

**The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen**  
**Chairman**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

**The Honorable Nita Lowey**  
**Ranking Member**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

**Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader Pelosi, Chairman Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Member Lowey:**

**I write to respectfully request that you swiftly advance an emergency supplemental appropriations bill that includes both the initial response to Hurricane Harvey and funding for wildland fire suppression across the United States.**

**While Texas has suffered from the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, the American West has battled severe wildfires. Currently, large fires are burning across California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Los Angeles is facing the largest wildfire in the city's history. The United States Forest Service (USFS) does not have adequate funding to combat these disasters.**

**In this crisis situation, an emergency supplemental appropriation is both appropriate and warranted.**

**On August 29, 2017, Secretary Sonny Perdue notified the House Committee on Appropriations that the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USFS) is projecting that it will not have sufficient wildland fire suppression funds for the remainder of fiscal year 2017.**

**In light of this dire situation, I respectfully request that the emergency appropriations for Harvey relief include at least \$300 million of funding with an emergency designation for wildfire suppression activities in fiscal year 2017. Such an appropriation is the only way to provide the necessary expenses for both wildfire suppression and rehabilitation activities.**

**Without such an emergency supplemental appropriation, the USFS will be forced to make damaging transfers from its wildfire treatment and protection activities. Historically, such transfers have negatively**

impacted the Service's ability to meet its mission and conduct preparedness activities to reduce the severity of wildfires.

For the citizens of California and other Western states, the severity of these wildland fires has been profound. The devastation caused by both disasters will be enormous – and the demands on the federal recovery and rebuilding efforts will be great.

As we address the impacts of the wildfires and the Hurricane Harvey, we cannot ignore the critical role that strong environmental protection laws and agencies, like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), play in keeping Americans safe in the aftermath of natural disasters and from everyday environmental burdens.

Hurricane Harvey will leave a legacy of significant environmental damage. Flood waters may contain high levels of raw sewage and harmful substances, such as hazardous waste, toxic chemicals, and petroleum. Once the floodwaters recede, soil sediment may be polluted. The EPA will be one of the primary federal agencies protecting human health, monitoring air and water, and managing recovery and cleanup.

It is because of this significant responsibility that we must acknowledge the deep cuts the EPA has already endured over the past seven years. Since fiscal year 2010, the EPA has been cut by \$2.2 billion. Today, the Agency has 2,000 fewer staff than it did seven years ago. There are consequences to such cuts – and the impact will be felt by the millions of Americans affected by Hurricane Harvey.

Congress must take immediate action to provide disaster relief and to secure clean air and clean water for Texans. At the same time, we must meet our responsibilities to adequately fund the EPA, so that it has the capacity to carry out its mission and protect the American people.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. From my conversations with constituents in Minnesota this week, I understand – as you do – that the American people are demanding strong and expeditious action to address the devastation of Hurricane Harvey and other natural disasters.

I look forward to working with you, in a bipartisan fashion, to meet the urgent needs of Americans hit by Hurricane Harvey and victimized by the wildfires across the West.

Sincerely,



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

Cc: Chairman Ken Calvert  
Member of the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies