

Guest Column: Be prepared in your neighborhood

September 10, 2023



The active wildfires currently burning in the district and the devastating fire in Hawaii serve as timely reminders to be prepared for fires in your neighborhood. What we once considered fire seasons have become an all-year phenomenon.

We must tackle this challenge head-on and make our communities more resilient for what's ahead. As your Representative in Washington, I am doing everything within my power to reduce the threat of future disasters, and getting resources to the North Coast to help folks prepare for and recover from wildfires is a top priority.

I want to share with you the latest resources as well as an update on the work I'm doing to help keep you and your families safe from the growing threat of fires in our district.

Wildfire Resource Guide

First, to help be prepared for a wildfire in your area, take a look at my Wildfire Resource Guide. You'll find information about evacuations, public shelters, and details about federal resources that may be available—like Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance and Small Business Administration loans.

Getting My Wildfire Priorities Signed into Law

Last Congress I was able to make huge progress in my work to combat wildfires: portions of my Wildfire Defense Act were signed into law by President Biden in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Most significantly, the legislation led to the creation of a \$1 billion Community Wildfire Defense Grant program, a valuable tool for helping at-risk communities, tribes, and state forestry agencies prepare for and alleviate wildfire hazards. I'm pleased to share that our district is already benefiting directly from this program: the Briceland Volunteer Fire Department, Del Norte Fire Safe Council, Humboldt County Resource Conservation District, Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, and the City of Ukiah were among the recipients for these grants.

My FIRE Act – which I led alongside Rep. Zoe Lofgren and Senator Alex Padilla – was also signed into law. This will be a game changer for FEMA, allowing the agency to respond faster to the risks of catastrophic wildfires, better prioritize the needs of survivors, and improve partnerships with tribal governments.

Combatting Climate Change with the Inflation Reduction Act

Getting serious about the threat of wildfires requires bold, meaningful climate action- full stop. Last August, President Joe Biden signed the historic Inflation Reduction Act into law, which includes the biggest investments in climate action in American history. This new law will reduce planet-warming carbon pollution by 40% within this decade.

Your Guide to Available Federal Grants

Ever since we passed the historic Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, my priority is making sure our district gets its fair share of these transformational investments. I've compiled a Grants Summary Guide to help you navigate the hundreds of grants and programs for which you might be eligible. Keep in mind programs are still rolling out, and this guide and my staff will be good resources for you moving forward.

Additional Legislative Activity

- Last summer, the House passed the Wildfire Response and Drought Resiliency Act to help us prevent and fight future wildfires by significantly increasing investments in our firefighting response. This transformative legislative package includes my FUTURE Western Water Infrastructure and Drought Resiliency Act, which would develop more resilient water infrastructure and help ensure that homeowners can meet the challenge of planning for climate change.
- I recently re-introduced my keystone public lands bills, the Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act, which includes several fire-prevention provisions and increases fire resilience

throughout the North Coast.

- Last Congress, Rep. Zoe Lofgren, Senator Padilla, and I also introduced the Disaster Equity and Fairness Act, which ensures that underserved areas victimized by wildfires can receive the help they need from FEMA to navigate the bureaucratic process to rebuild their communities.
- I again worked with Senator Alex Padilla last year on a separate bill, the Post Fire Flooding and Debris Flow Act, which would help mitigate and ultimately prevent post-wildfire flooding and debris flows.
- I have the unique position of being able to call on the administration to extend resources by issuing Major Disaster Declarations like I did during the August 2021 wildfires.

I also advocated for grants from FEMA to support victims and survivors of wildfires, and I was pleased the administration heeded my request and awarded a \$2.6 million grant to Santa Rosa for fire support measures related to the 2019 Kincadee fire.

As a leading voice in Congress for wildfire prevention and resiliency, I'm not blind to the fact that there is still a lot more work to be done. I'll keep partnering with my congressional colleagues to make sure we continue investing in the resources necessary to keep our communities safe.

And don't forget: My staff and I are here to help in any way we can. Please don't hesitate to call one of my district offices if you need assistance. If we aren't the right place to get you what you need, my staff can also guide you to the state and local resources available.

To keep up with the work I am doing as your representative, please subscribe to my newsletter, and follow me on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and my new account on Threads.

Thank you, and stay safe,

Jared Huffman

Member of Congress