



Udall, Heinrich Join Bipartisan Senators Urging Congress To Pass Wildfire Funding Fix In Any Future Disaster Aid

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - With large fires blazing across Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming, U.S. Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich joined a bipartisan group of senators led by Sens. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), in a letter urging Senate Leaders Mitch McConnell and Charles E. Schumer to include a wildfire funding fix in any future disaster aid legislation that passes through Congress.

The Senate passed a bipartisan funding bill to help with the cost of fighting the wildfires in western states as part of the disaster and government funding bill that was signed into law last week. However, the funding included does not fix the long-term problem of consistently underfunding fire suppression, which currently forces federal agencies to steal from fire prevention to fight fires, so-called "fire borrowing."

"We stand ready to work with our colleagues in a bipartisan way in Congress to do everything we can to ensure the victims of Hurricane Harvey get the assistance they need," the bipartisan group of senators wrote. "As we work to assist Texas and Louisiana on the road to recovery, please do not forget about wildfires – the natural disaster currently raging through the West.

"We ask that any disaster aid package or other must-pass legislation that passes through Congress include a wildfire funding fix. This fix is long overdue and people throughout the West desperately need our help."

Wildfires have burned almost 8 million acres of land across the West this year, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Thousands of residents have been forced to evacuate from their homes, and the U.S. Forest Service has already spent more than \$1.7 billion this year to put out fires. With the Forest Service's fire suppression budget nearly depleted, the agency is likely to have to borrow from fire prevention money to tackle wildfires during the remainder of the fire season.

A copy of the letter is available [here](#).

