

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2022

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## House Republican Leadership calls for immediate joint-state and federal investigation into destructive Hermits Peak Fire

*The Hermits Peak Fire is apparently under investigation by the federal government, and House Republicans are calling for the State of New Mexico to immediately conduct its own investigation to ensure transparency for New Mexicans. This letter follows [an April 27<sup>th</sup> statement from House GOP Leader Townsend blasting the Governor and the US Forest Service for reckless disregard of safety.](#)*

Santa Fe – Today House Republican Leadership issued a letter to Governor Lujan Grisham calling for an immediate investigation, to be conducted within New Mexico state government agencies, that would parallel an apparent federal investigation into the Forest Service’s controlled burns, specifically the Hermits Peak Fire.

The NM House Republican letter, signed by House Republican Leader Jim Townsend (Artesia), House Republican Whip Rod Montoya (Farmington), and House Republican Caucus Chair Rebecca Dow (T or C), follows weeks of backlash and upset from New Mexicans concerning the reckless [disregard for safety](#) in conducting the controlled burn that caused the [nation’s largest wildfire](#).

From the letter: *“It is our sincerest belief that the people of northern New Mexico deserve an impartial and detailed investigation conducted by parties other than those employed by the federal government. Such an investigation was quickly initiated regarding the prescribed burn that resulted in the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000 and the people of northern New Mexico currently being affected by these destructive fires deserve the same response by state and federal officials.”*

The letter to the Governor was hand delivered today and is attached to the release.

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State of New Mexico  
House of Representatives  
State Capitol  
Santa Fe

May 13, 2022

The Honorable Michele Lujan Grisham  
Governor, State of New Mexico  
State Capitol, Room 400  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

HAND DELIVERED 5/13/2022

Dear Governor:

As you are well aware, the Hermit's Peak Fire began on April 6, 2022 and the fire continues to grow, affecting a significant portion of northern New Mexico. An executive order was issued sixteen days later and a presidential major disaster declaration was not approved until May 4, 2022, a full month after the incident began. Recent documentation indicates that so far 172 homes have been destroyed in that area and the number is likely to increase during the time the fire continues to burn towards the north.

We are writing to insist that a joint state and federal multi-agency investigation be immediately conducted regarding the causes of the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire. As we currently understand the situation, the federal government plans on conducting its own interagency investigation. However, because the United States Forest Service ordered the prescribed burn that became the Hermit's Peak Fire, an investigation conducted solely by the federal government lacks fundamental guarantees of transparency and trustworthiness and leaves northern New Mexicans without any confidence that a thorough and fair investigation will be conducted. In our view, only a joint state and federal investigation can gather all relevant information regarding the cause of the fire and determine who should be held accountable for this massive destruction and harm to our beautiful state. Further, a joint state and federal investigation is necessary to prevent an event of this magnitude from ever occurring again.

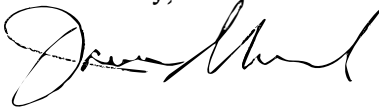
It is our sincerest belief that the people of northern New Mexico deserve an impartial and detailed investigation conducted by parties other than those employed by the federal government. Such an investigation was quickly initiated regarding the prescribed burn that resulted in the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000 and the people of northern New Mexico currently being affected by these destructive fires deserve the same response by state and federal officials.

Additionally, while we understand the purpose of Executive Orders 2022-017, 2022-19, and 2022-22 in authorizing resources to the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management during this emergency, we remain concerned with the lack of available support resources being currently utilized to assist the families, and communities being impacted by the fire. In turn, we are requesting all relevant information regarding what support resources have been assigned to the area and what steps are being taken to ensure resources will be available in the future. Your assistance in helping us understand what specific resources and services are available will allow us to answer questions raised by New Mexicans in that area and connect them to the services they so desperately need.

We believe the people of northern New Mexico deserve to know as soon as possible what your administration is doing today and in the future to assist people in recouping their losses from the federal action which caused this massive destruction.

We look forward to your response.

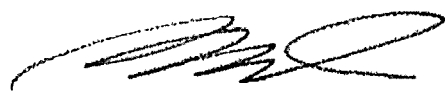
Sincerely,



Jim Townsend  
Republican Floor Leader



Rod Montoya  
Republican Whip



Rebecca Dow  
Republican Caucus Chair

CC: Mayor Louie A. Trujillo