

August 31, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
United States Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: Fire and Emergency Services Districts, COVID-19 and Wildfire, Hurricanes**

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer,

On behalf of more than 6,000 special districts providing fire and emergency response to millions of Americans, we, the undersigned leaders of fire and emergency services associations, ask that you urgently and expeditiously include COVID-19 relief for special districts, as local governments, in the upcoming relief package pending negotiations.

As you read this letter, thousands of firefighters and emergency responders from our special districts are responding to wildfires ravaging the western United States. These men and women are working tirelessly to battle flames, save lives and livelihoods, protect property, and defend entire communities from devastation. Emergency services districts along the Gulf Coast are dealing with the aftermath of a major hurricane to aid search, rescue, and emergency response amidst extreme conditions. For localities they serve, they are always first to respond to fire and medical emergencies – with elevated risk to their own health and safety due to COVID-19.

These services are among the most critical at any given time. Yet, while city and county governments received millions of dollars in federal relief earlier this year, **most of these fire and emergency services districts have not received, will not receive, or are still uncertain whether they will receive Coronavirus Relief Fund monies, further compounding their ability to handle simultaneous crises.**

Special purpose governments providing emergency services vary from small to mid-size. Some operate with limited staff while others are staffed with volunteers. These special districts have incurred disproportionate amounts of unexpected COVID-19-related expenses in response to COVID-19. In fact, many report unbudgeted COVID-19 expenses totaling more than half of their annual operating revenues or, worse, exceeding their annual operating revenues. **The pandemic has strained these essential community services, compounding the danger of the wildfire and hurricane seasons we knew were coming.**

More than 33,000 wildland fires burning more than 2.3 million acres so far this year have strained resources available to serve and protect communities throughout America. We are only at the beginning of the 2020 wildfire season and just halfway through the traditional hurricane season, and the worst may be yet to come. **With great concern, we respectfully request you incorporate the bipartisan Special Districts Provide Essential Services Act (S. 4308, H.R. 7073) into the federal relief bill currently pending negotiations.** This legislation will give special districts – including fire and emergency/EMS districts – certain access to future appropriations of the Coronavirus Relief Fund.

S. 4308 and H.R. 7073, the Special Districts Provide Essential Services Act, would meet the needs of special districts and their essential emergency workers with the following provisions (of S. 4308):

- **Allows special districts direct access to the Coronavirus Relief Fund.** The bill requires states to distribute five percent of future Coronavirus Relief Fund allocations that they receive to special districts within 60 days of receiving funds from the U.S. Treasury. Special districts would have to apply and demonstrate need based on revenue losses and COVID-19 related expenditures, which governors or their designated state agencies must certify.

- **Creates limits to allocations** such that a special district may not receive funding that exceeds the amount the district expended in any quarter of 2019. However, special districts providing services that the federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency deems to be within a “critical infrastructure sector” would be exempt from limitations, including fire and emergency services districts.
- **Provides flexibility for states with excess funds reserved for special districts** that make a good faith effort to distribute funds to districts within 60 days of receipt from the U.S. Treasury.
- **Defines “special district”** as a “political subdivision of a State, formed pursuant to general law or special act of the State, for the purpose of performing one or more governmental or proprietary functions.” With the multitude of services that special districts throughout the country deliver, it is important to have a clear understanding of what is – and what is not – a special district. The definition in the bill was developed through a collaborative and consensus-driven process by leading local service specialists across the nation.

We and the emergency services agencies we represent thank you for your leadership and for your consideration on this urgent matter as we fight multiple disasters across our nation. We stand ready to work with you on this important need moving forward.

Sincerely,



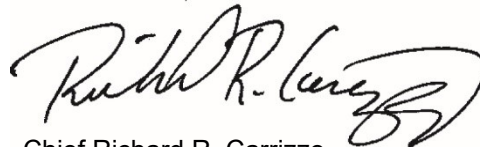
Candy McCullough  
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Cliff Avery  
Executive Director  
Texas State Association of Fire and Emergency Districts



Fire Chief Jeffrey D. Johnson, Ret.  
Chief Executive Officer  
Western Fire Chiefs Association



Chief Richard R. Carrizzo  
President and Chairman of the Board  
International Association of Fire Chiefs



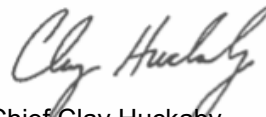
John Flynn  
Executive Director  
Arizona Fire Districts Association



Genoa Ingram  
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Oregon Fire District Directors' Association



Michael Newberry  
President  
Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts



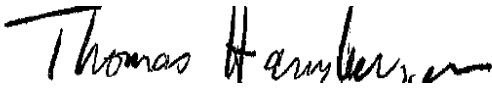
Chief Clay Huckaby  
President  
Texas Fire Chiefs Association



Jeff Griffin  
Executive Director  
Oregon Fire Chiefs Association



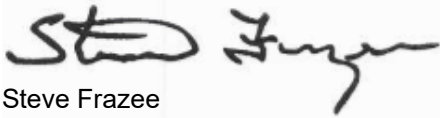
Bonnie M. Jones  
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Thomas Harnesberger  
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Chief Tom DeMint  
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Scott Frandsen  
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Rich Cowger  
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Keith Murray  
President  
Louisiana Fire Chiefs Association



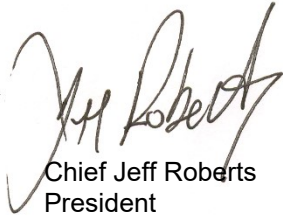
Chief Steve Kovacs  
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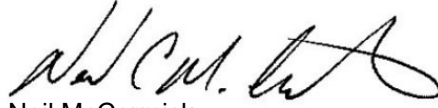
Chief Scott Freitag  
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LeGrand Bitter  
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CC: Arizona Congressional Delegation, Senator Kyrsten Sinema, Senator Martha McSally  
California Congressional Delegation, Senator Diane Feinstein, Senator Kamala Harris  
Colorado Congressional Delegation, Senator Michael Bennet, Senator Cory Gardner  
Florida Congressional Delegation, Senator Marco Rubio, Senator Rick Scott  
Idaho Congressional Delegation, Senator Michael Crapo, Senator James Risch  
Illinois Congressional Delegation, Senator Richard Durbin, Senator Tammy Duckworth  
Kansas Congressional Delegation, Senator Pat Roberts, Senator Jerry Moran  
Louisiana Congressional Delegation, Senator Bill Cassidy, Senator John Kennedy  
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Michigan Congressional Delegation, Senator Debbie Stabenow, Senator Gary Peters  
Missouri Congressional Delegation, Senator Roy Blunt, Senator Josh Hawley  
Montana Congressman Greg Gianforte, Senator Jon Tester, Senator Steve Daines  
New Jersey Congressional Delegation, Senator Bob Menendez, Senator Cory Booker  
Oregon Congressional Delegation, Senator Ron Wyden, Senator Jeff Merkley  
Texas Congressional Delegation, Senator John Cornyn, Senator Ted Cruz  
Utah Congressional Delegation, Senator Mike Lee, Senator Mitt Romney  
Washington Congressional Delegation, Senator Patty Murray, Senator Maria Cantwell