

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 5, 2013

W. Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

We write to share our concern with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) decision to reject the State of Arizona's request to designate the Yarnell Hill Fire a major disaster. A disaster declaration would have made the citizens of Yavapai County, affected by the fire, eligible for federal disaster assistance. It is our understanding that Arizona Governor Jan Brewer, consistent with the Stafford Act, has officially submitted an appeal. We support the Governor's request, and respectfully ask that the Administration act on it expeditiously.

The Yarnell Hill Fire began burning approximately 30 miles southwest of Prescott, Arizona off Highway 89 on June 28, 2013. The blaze burned approximately 8,400 acres over fifteen days. During the disaster, nineteen firefighters from the Granite Mountain Interagency Hotshot Crew lost their lives battling the fire, the sixth deadliest American firefighter disaster overall and the deadliest wildfire ever in Arizona. Additionally, it is our understanding that the fire burned hundreds of structures, including more than twenty percent of the homes in the unincorporated community of Yarnell, located in Yavapai County.

We further understand that a significant segment (35%) of the affected Yarnell population is elderly, earns an income of less than \$25,000, and is either uninsured or underinsured for this disaster. We believe that these are all factors that FEMA should more carefully weigh. Moreover, we have been informed that the neighboring community of Prescott, Arizona, has expended approximately 10% of its municipal budget addressing the added stress of firefighting activities, including covering expenses associated with the traumatic loss of the Granite Mountain Interagency Hotshot Crew. Finally, there remains a need for a federal Burn Area Emergency Response (BAER) team to perform soil damage severity assessments and develop floodwater models that will cover the 5-year post-fire period during which the community will remain vulnerable to the threat of a catastrophic flood event. Under existing law, a federal disaster declaration would trigger that critical technical assistance to prevent and mitigate damage caused by such flooding.

On July 1, you issued a statement that declared, in part, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who lost their lives fighting the Yarnell Hill Fire in Arizona. FEMA stands behind the first responders who continue to fight the blazes across the West." President Obama also issued a statement on July 1, asserting that the "federal government is already assisting, and we will remain in close contact with state and local officials to provide the support they need."

Such statements imply that the federal government will remain involved in assisting the community.

Thank you for your careful reconsideration of the Governor's request. We look forward to a prompt response. As always, we ask that this matter be handled in strict accordance with the existing agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices with any questions.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senator



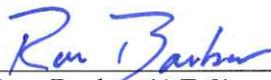
Jeff Flake
United States Senator



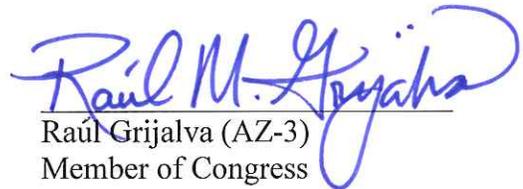
Paul Gosar (AZ-4)
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick (AZ-1)
Member of Congress



Ron Barber (AZ-2)
Member of Congress



Raul Grijalva (AZ-3)
Member of Congress



Matt Salmon (AZ-5)
Member of Congress



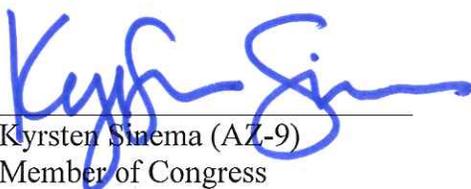
David Schweikert (AZ-6)
Member of Congress



Ed Pastor (AZ-7)
Member of Congress



Trent Franks (AZ-8)
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema (AZ-9)
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