



July 15, 2015

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Roberts and Senator Stabenow:

On behalf of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) and the U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA), we write to you concerning H.R. 2647, *the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015*, which was recently referred to your committee. We have serious concerns about provisions in H.R. 2647 that will undermine the basic premise of federal disaster assistance in this country and will impact FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund (DRF). We believe they will fundamentally change the purpose of the DRF and set a troubling precedent.

As you know, the DRF is FEMA's primary source of funding for disaster assistance to state, local, and tribal governments, and certain private nonprofits. When a disaster overwhelms a state, a governor can request a disaster declaration. If the President approves it, the state may receive assistance through several programs, such as Public Assistance and Individual Assistance—all of which is funded through the DRF. The purpose of this funding is to assist states, localities, and tribes, and it has proven crucial to help them effectively respond to disasters and quickly begin the recovery process.

Title IX of H.R. 2647 will significantly change the structure and purpose of the Stafford Act by permitting the transfer of funds to the Departments of Interior and Agriculture for wildfire suppression activities on federal lands. This would mark a dramatic change and expansion to the program, as until now major disaster funding has been directed at assistance for state, local and

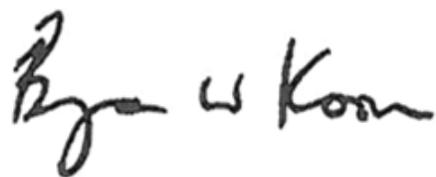
tribal response and recovery, as well as FEMA's efforts to that end. Moreover, this change would set a troubling precedent, as additional agencies will likely similarly seek to use FEMA funding to fund other federal activities. This will put further stress on the DRF, which has previously needed supplemental appropriations to fund disaster costs.

NEMA and IAEM-USA recognize the importance of providing appropriate funding for fighting wildland fires on federal lands. These fires have consequences for the whole community, and our federal partners should receive the support and assistance they need. However, we believe that funding for this need should be provided directly to agencies with responsibility for this issue—rather than by creating complicated changes to the DRF that change and expand the purpose of the program.

If you need any additional information or have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Jason Thomas Barnosky, NEMA Director of Government Relations at (202) 624-5459 or Martha Braddock, Policy Advisor IAEM-USA at (703) 624-9284.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan W. Koon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bryan Koon, President
National Emergency Management Association

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John 'Rusty' Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, slanted style.

John "Rusty" Russell, President
U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers

cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson and the Honorable Tom Carper.

About NEMA

Established in 1974, NEMA represents the emergency management directors of the 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. These professionals are responsible to their governors for all-hazards emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery from all emergencies, disasters, and threats to the homeland. NEMA is a non-profit, non-partisan organization headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky, and an affiliate of the Council of State Governments.

About IAEM

IAEM-USA is our nation's largest association of emergency management professionals, with over 6,500 members including emergency managers at the state and local government levels, tribal nations, the military, colleges and universities, hospitals, private business and the nonprofit sector. Most of our members are U.S. city and county emergency managers who perform the crucial function of coordinating and integrating the efforts at the local level to prepare for, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from all types of disasters including terrorist attacks.