



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

January 16, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Leader Thune, and Leader Schumer,

California is facing one of the worst natural disasters in our history. On Tuesday, January 7, hurricane-force winds in Los Angeles County fueled a firestorm that has left at least 25 people dead and burned to the ground thousands of homes, businesses, schools and churches. Even with the state prepositioning assets — and the quick deployment of the mightiest firefighting force in the country — the 100-mile-per-hour winds fueled unimaginable conditions that grounded our aerial fleet and created a firestorm that swept through whole neighborhoods in a matter of hours. California is working tirelessly to extinguish the embers and begin the process of rebuilding. But we cannot do this alone — this crisis demands a united and immediate federal response.

Californians urge you to provide expedited supplemental disaster aid to assist the ongoing response without conditions or prolonged negotiation. Doing otherwise would delay the assistance our communities desperately need. Families who have lost everything, firefighters and emergency responders who have worked tirelessly to save lives, and local governments overwhelmed by the scale of this disaster are counting on swift federal support.

In times of natural disaster — from Hurricane Katrina to Hurricane Helene — Americans have always stood together, setting aside politics to extend a helping hand to those in need. Historically, federal disaster aid has been provided without conditions, recognizing that political calculations or regional

divides should not encumber relief efforts. Our long national history of responding to natural disasters, no matter where they occur, has always been Americans helping Americans, full stop. This principle of unity is at the heart of our nation's resilience.

Some have suggested that California did not do enough to prepare ahead of this catastrophe, so allow me to set the record straight. Under my administration, California has taken historic action to strengthen wildfire resilience and emergency response. The number of CAL FIRE personnel has nearly doubled since 2019, growing from 5,829 to 10,741. CAL FIRE's budget has also nearly doubled in that time, increasing from \$2 billion to \$3.8 billion. We have expanded the budget for wildfire and forest resilience tenfold — from \$200 million annually in 2018 to \$2 billion in cumulative investments alongside the ongoing \$200 million yearly commitment. These measures represent California's commitment to mitigating wildfire risks. Further, water reservoirs in Southern California are at near-record levels, and there is no shortage in the region. Let's be clear: Extreme heat, sustained hurricane-force winds, and dry conditions created an unprecedented challenge for Los Angeles — conditions that allowed any ignition to explode into a firestorm.

To better understand the gravity of the situation, I echo Representatives Sherman and Chu and invite you to visit the affected areas with me and witness firsthand the devastation Californians are enduring. Touring the communities and meeting with the countless Americans who have suffered extreme trauma will give you a deeper understanding of the need for unconditioned and immediate federal aid.

Our challenges are not unique to California, as natural disasters have intensified and grown in number across the country. This issue transcends party lines and state boundaries. By working together, we can ensure that all Americans — whether in Louisiana, Florida, California, or anywhere else — receive the assistance they need when disaster strikes. I stand ready, along with the full weight of our Congressional delegation, to work with you to secure the necessary aid for California and every American state impacted by disasters.

Respectfully,



Gavin Newsom
Governor of California