

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 4, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to urge your support for supplemental disaster appropriations legislation to help communities struggling to recover from natural disasters that occurred in 2020 and early 2021. In addition to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, many communities devastated by hurricanes, wildfires, and floods need specific relief.

According to the National Centers for Environmental Information, 2020 shattered the previous annual record for “billion dollar” disasters. In 2020, 22 “billion-dollar events” cost the nation a combined \$95 billion in damages. The western United States experienced one of the most destructive fires seasons on record, with over 10 million acres burned. Similarly, Gulf and Atlantic States experienced the most active hurricane season on record. In early 2021, a severe winter storm disrupted utility service to millions throughout the South and Midwest.

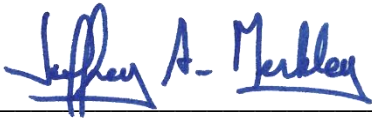
While in most cases the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has delivered substantial emergency relief to affected communities, the scale of natural disasters experienced in 2020 demands additional resources that can only be delivered through a disaster supplemental. As you develop legislation to address this un-met need, we urge you to include:

- Assistance to help thousands of families who lost their homes due to wildfire or hurricanes by providing funding for programs like the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery, Emergency Solutions Grants, and Social Services Block Grants.
- Funding to repair water infrastructure and other infrastructure damaged in 2020 due to, hurricanes, wildfire, and winter storms.
- Support for restoration of natural landscapes, including forests and coastal wetlands, which were damaged by hurricanes, wildfire, and other disasters.
- Relief for farmers and ranchers who suffered losses in calendar year 2020 and are likely to suffer losses in 2021.

It is critical that we move quickly to enact supplemental disaster relief. The extreme drought and tornadoes that have already impacted much of the country are an early sign of what is likely going to be another difficult year for many states. We cannot afford to allow the impact of an entire year's worth of natural disasters go unaddressed.

We thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey A. Merkley in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Bill Cassidy, M.D. in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator