

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 16, 2026

The Honorable Russ Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Vought,

We write to request information and documentation on the disaster declaration and federal disaster aid approval process given the significant partisan disparity in President Trump's approval of disaster declarations and related federal disaster relief funds, including Public Assistance (PA) and Individual Assistance (IA), since the start of his second term. It is our understanding that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) assists the President in his review of disaster declaration requests.

According to a recent article published in *Politico*, President Trump's second Administration has rejected PA disaster aid for Democratic-run states at the highest rate in the 47-year history of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).¹ The report found that President Trump has approved just 23 percent of disaster declaration requests from states with a Democratic governor and two Democratic senators since the start of his second term, a stark contrast to the 89 percent approval rate for states with a Republican governor and two Republican senators have enjoyed thus far.²

In addition to these disparities in outcomes, there are also significant differences in the time it takes to reach a decision. According to *Politico*, Republican-led states have had to wait 39 days on average for a decision compared to the 80-day average for Democratic-led states.³ These delays have left disaster survivors in the dark waiting to learn whether the federal government will assist in their recovery.

The article further notes that since April 2025, President Trump has denied nine requests for PA despite meeting the state per capita indicator thresholds. *Politico* reported that of these, only one denial involved a state with a Republican governor and two Republican senators, while six denials involved states with Democratic governors and two Democratic senators. Denying disaster requests for PA that exceed the damage threshold is a sharp departure from historical precedent. Prior to April 2025, each such request dating back to 2007 ultimately received presidential approval.⁴ To be clear, this reporting suggests that in the wake of disasters, as

¹ Thomas Frank, "It's 3 times harder for blue states to get disaster funding under Trump," *Politico*, March 23, 2026. <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/03/23/trump-denies-disaster-aid-for-democratic-led-states-00831199>

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

President, President Trump, who has the sole authority to grant or deny this assistance, may be punishing Americans who live in states with Democratic Senators and Governors, by denying access to disaster relief funding.

White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson has said “the days of rubber stamping FEMA recommendations” are over and claimed that President Trump conducts “a more thorough review of disaster declaration requests than any [previous] Administration[.]”⁵ However, federal regulations require FEMA to provide recommendations based on specific, verifiable criteria. To date, President Trump’s Administration has provided no further information regarding what this new approval process entails or what metrics or other considerations it relies on, causing uncertainty that leaves disaster survivors in the dark.

It is critical that Congress understand why disaster assistance requests have been denied and ensure the process is free from political influence. Therefore, please provide the following by no later than July 9 for all requests adjudicated since January 21, 2025:

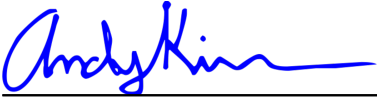
- The number of declaration requests, including a breakdown of the emergency declarations, the major disaster declarations, and what type of assistance (PA, IA, HMGP including categories of assistance) was requested.
- The number of declaration requests approved and denied categorized by emergency declaration and major disaster declaration.
- The number of approved declaration requests with denied specific categories of assistance under PA or IA.
- The offices within the White House that play a role in reviewing FEMA’s recommendation and/or making a recommendation to the President and describe the role each office plays is.
- All documents and internal communications relating to every FEMA regional office recommendation, as well as the official regional office recommendations, for all state and tribal disaster assistance requests.
- All documents and internal communications pertaining to every recommendation of FEMA Headquarters, as well as the official FEMA Headquarters recommendations, for all state and tribal disaster assistance requests.
- All documents and internal communications pertaining to every FEMA Administrator’s recommendation, as well as the official FEMA Administrator recommendations, for all state disaster assistance requests.
- All documents and internal communications with Department of Homeland Security officials pertaining to any and all recommendations from FEMA Regional Administrators and/or FEMA Headquarters.
- Any analysis or discussion of FEMA recommendations, including emails, conducted by White House staff, including from the offices of the National Security Council, the Office of Management and Budget, Public Affairs, Legislative Affairs, and Intergovernmental Affairs.

⁵ Caitlyn Kim, “Colorado will not receive FEMA aid for last year’s fires and flooding,” *Colorado Public Radio*, April 14, 2026. <https://www.cpr.org/2026/04/14/fema-aid-denied-colorado/>

- Any new metrics or considerations the White House is using to determine decisions for major and emergency disaster declaration requests.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to receiving your timely response.

Sincerely,



Andy Kim
United States Senator
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Disaster
Management, District of
Columbia, and Census
Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental
Affairs



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



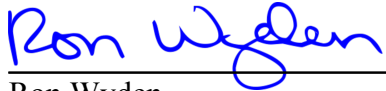
Peter Welch
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator




Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



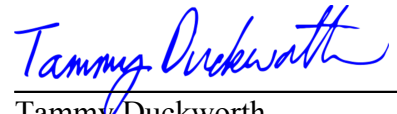
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator