

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Acting Chief Tom Schultz
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

September 12, 2025

Dear Secretary Burgum and Acting Chief Schultz,

We are writing to request an explanation for the Administration's sudden decision to terminate the Women in Wildland Fire Boot Camp (WIWF) program. The WIWF Boot Camp was eliminated by President Trump's Executive Order 14151 in January, titled "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing."

The WIWF program was established in 2011 by a group of dedicated female firefighting professionals employed by the U.S. Forest Service for the purpose of increasing firefighter recruitment within Federal land management agencies. The program gave both women and interested men an opportunity to learn the basic skills, requirements, and knowledge necessary to begin a career as a wildland firefighter or in related wildfire and natural resource management positions. The two-week course exposed boot camp participants to the demands and the risk that accompany the wildland fire management profession. This program armed its participants with the knowledge and confidence to apply for further training and full-time wildland fire management positions. Those that remained interested were encouraged to apply.

The WIWF program and its boot camps were successful. At minimal cost to the federal government, WIWF expanded recruitment opportunities at the USFS and other land management agencies to include more women, who are under-represented in U.S. Forest Service Fire Management personnel at all levels, and make up only 13 percent of USFS Fire Management personnel. At the height of the program, 14 National Forests and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) units provided training and successfully recruited over 200 individuals a year. Graduates of these boot camps have gone on to work in fields across the fire management profession, with many becoming seasonal wildland firefighters, and others working on fuels crews, Hotshot Crews, fire engines, and more. Many graduates went on to become full-time employees at USFS, BLM, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

At the July 10, 2025, hearing to examine the Fiscal Year 2026 USFS budget request before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Acting Chief Tom Schultz was asked to explain why the WIWF program was eliminated. He responded, "there are still ample opportunities for all firefighters to be trained without singling out solely women." This response did not sufficiently explain the rationale to eliminate this program, especially since the program provided training for both women and men.

Thousands of firings at land management agencies across the country have already left land managers understaffed for upcoming fire seasons. We are concerned the elimination of this program will exacerbate this issue. Wildfire management is a year-round task that requires constant attention and skilled labor. Eliminating a successful outreach program such as the WIWF Boot Camps unnecessarily limits recruitment to a smaller pool of potential trainees when there is already a shortage of skilled and willing potential workers in a field where more dedicated and motivated personnel are urgently needed. We are

further concerned this decision seems to have been made for no other reason than it expanded opportunities to women.

We request a detailed explanation as to why this program was eliminated and we also request that the program be immediately reinstated.

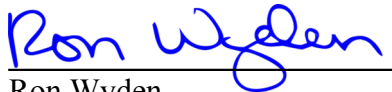
Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



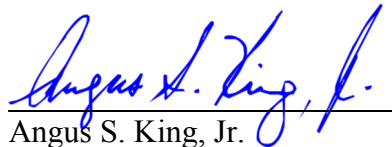
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Energy and Natural
Resources



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



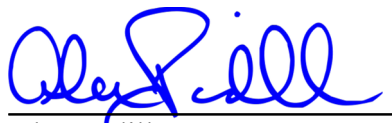
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator