

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 22, 2006

The Honorable Conrad Burns
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Burns and Ranking Member Dorgan:

As the Subcommittee prepares to mark up the fiscal year (FY) 2007 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide \$10 million to fund the Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) program.

The RFA program was authorized in 2001 to support the fire response and protection capabilities of rural and volunteer fire departments that fight fires on or near federal land. The program provides rural and volunteer fire departments with grants of up to \$20,000 for training, equipment purchase, and prevention activities. In order to qualify for an RFA grant, a fire department must serve a community of less than 10,000 people near federal land, must pay for at least 10% of the project being funded, and must have a mutual aid agreement with the local Department of Interior agency or with the State.

RFA grants are a major source of support for rural and volunteer fire departments across the country. In FY 2006, Congress appropriated \$10 million to the RFA program. Unfortunately, the President's budget proposed eliminating this important program. Without RFA grants, the ability of rural and volunteer fire departments to protect their communities, federal land, and the wildland-urban interface will be greatly diminished.

Our rural and volunteer fire fighters do an extraordinary job of protecting our communities and our federal land – and deserve the best available equipment and training. While we understand the budget constraints facing the Subcommittee, we urge you to fully fund the RFA program.

Thank you for your consideration.



Ken Salazar

Sincerely,



Orrin Hatch

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 22, 2006

Preserve Funding for the Rural Fire Assistance Program

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to join us in signing the attached letter to Chairman Burns and Ranking Member Dorgan encouraging the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies to provide \$10 million to fund the Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) program.

The RFA program was authorized in 2001 to support the fire response and protection capabilities of rural and volunteer fire departments that fight fires on or near federal land. The program provides rural and volunteer fire departments with grants of up to \$20,000 for training, equipment purchase, and prevention activities. In order to qualify for an RFA grant, a fire department must serve a community of less than 10,000 people near federal land, must pay for at least 10% of the project being funded, and must have a mutual aid agreement with the local Department of Interior agency or with the State.

To give you a sense of how RFA funds are distributed around the country, we have attached a spreadsheet from the National Interagency Fire Center which details the FY 2006 Budget Planning Guideline for the program. As you can see from the spreadsheet, RFA grants are a major source of support for rural and volunteer fire departments across the country.

In FY 2006, Congress appropriated \$10 million to the RFA program. Unfortunately, the President's budget proposed eliminating this important program. Without RFA grants, the ability of rural and volunteer fire departments to protect their communities, federal land, and the wildland-urban interface will be greatly diminished.

Our rural and volunteer fire fighters do an extraordinary job of protecting our communities and our federal land – and deserve the best available equipment and training. If you would like to join us in signing this letter, or if you have any questions, please contact Sam Goodstein in Senator Salazar's office at 8-5422 or William Castle in Senator Hatch's office at 4-0815. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Ken Salazar



Orrin Hatch

2006 DOI RFA BUDGET PLANNING GUIDELINE

dollars in thousands

State	\$000
AK	\$34
AL	\$0
AR	\$118
AZ	\$673
CA	\$939
CO	\$482
CT	\$0
DC	\$0
DE	\$0
FL	\$88
GA	\$52
HI	\$20
GUAM	\$20
IA	\$28
ID	\$683
IL	\$32
IN	\$23
KS	\$69
KY	\$98
LA	\$0
MA	\$62
MD	\$12
ME	\$50
MI	\$59
MN	\$268
MO	\$53
MS	\$14

State	\$000
MT	\$978
NC	\$109
ND	\$116
NE	\$63
NH	\$4
NJ	\$30
NM	\$523
NV	\$691
NY	\$29
OH	\$13
OK	\$232
OR	\$766
PA	\$46
PR	\$33
RI	\$8
SC	\$56
SD	\$224
TN	\$131
TX	\$219
UT	\$763
VA	\$47
VI	\$24
VT	\$14
WA	\$115
WI	\$188
WV	\$80
WY	\$579

Grand Total **\$9,958**