

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20510

June 21, 2018

Interim Chief Vicki Christiansen  
USDA Forest Service  
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building  
201 14th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Interim Chief Christiansen,

We are writing to follow up on a series of stories by Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) News Hour highlighting the systemic problems with sexual misconduct, harassment, and retaliation within the U.S. Forest Service, specifically within the agency's wildland firefighting division.

Our nation's wildland firefighters are critical to protecting our communities from wildland fires and are required to work closely together to be effective and efficient, which is precisely why reports detailing the culture of misconduct are so shocking. With another severe fire season fast approaching, we owe it to those on the frontlines to ensure that they have the support they need to do their jobs without fear of workplace harassment and retaliation.

In April 2018, your agency announced a thirty-day action plan to address harassment, sexual misconduct, and retaliation within the Forest Service. This action plan included, among other steps, holding listening sessions, working with outside professionals, and holding "Stand Up" sessions oriented toward preventing harassment, assault, bullying, and retaliation. While this thirty-day action plan is a good first step, addressing a persistent culture of harassment requires real, significant changes in policy.

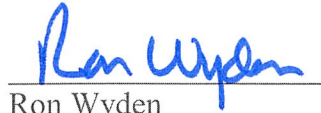
Now that the thirty days have passed, we request an update on the Forest Service's plans to address the harassment of its employees and contractors, including plans for monitoring, training, enforcement, and anti-retaliation efforts. This would include the monitoring of reassignments, demotions, and changes in duties, access, compensation, or advancement for those reporting harassment. Please provide a written response within thirty calendar days.

If left unaddressed, a culture of harassment will only serve to make an already difficult job harder and threaten the ability of our wildland firefighters to effectively and efficiently do their jobs. Thank you for your attention to this issue, and we look forward to a swift response.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress