

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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August 18, 2017

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration 409 3rd Street, SW
Washington D.C. 20416

Dear Administrator McMahon,


We write to request your review of the small business set-aside for the companies that provide wildfire initial attack crews. The industry that responds to and manages wildland fires has changed significantly over the last two decades, and a review of the caps that are currently in place is due.

In the past two decades, wildfire suppression response has become increasingly supplied by the private sector. Prior to 2002, contracted firefighting crews were a rarity. Today, the private sector provides hundreds of professionally-trained wildland firefighters across the United States. SBA rules have not maintained pace with the transformation of the workforce. At present, a private firefighting crew averages 50 days of firefighting annually. However, many businesses have begun trying to keep crews together and employed the remainder of the year to reduce employee turnover. Examples of other work these crews have performed outside fire season include brush removal, tree planting, and piling and burning hazardous fuels. Unfortunately, providing year-round work to these small crews may jeopardize the ability of a business to remain under the current SBA revenue cap of \$19 million. Keeping crews employed in the off-season can result in more cohesive, and therefore more effective crews, and can ensure that crews are available when needed throughout the year.

Two years ago, widespread fires, particularly in the Northwest, resulted in there being insufficient firefighting crews to fill the demand. We want to ensure the Federal government is reviewing all of its policies to make certain our country has the best, most effective pool of firefighting resources available.

Lastly, in your review, we request you consider the parity of the existing SBA revenue cap for companies that provide fire suppression services with the SBA revenue caps for related industries, like catering companies that provide services to the fire community and companies that provide emergency relief services. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Adjusting this cap, should you deem it necessary after your review, could improve the availability of this critical public service in times of need.

Sincerely,



James E. Risch
Chairman



Maria Cantwell
Senator