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February 9, 2017

Mr. K. Jack Haugrud  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240

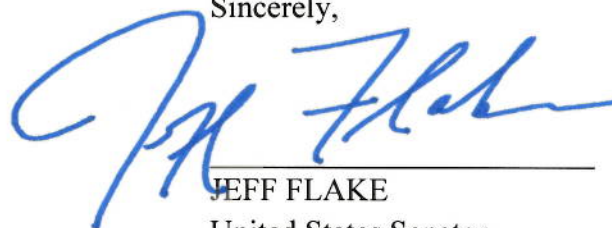
Dear Acting Secretary Haugrud,

I would like to ask for your prompt action to ensure the continued ability to fight wildfires after the implementation of a freeze on hiring of Federal civilian employees. As you know, catastrophic wildfires in Arizona pose a significant risk to the state's reliable water supply, rural communities, the tourist economy, and wildlife. Any action that could have a negative impact on the ability to reduce fire risk and fight wildfire in Arizona is simply unacceptable.

The Presidential Memorandum Regarding the Hiring Freeze promulgated on January 23, 2017 contains a clear exception to the freeze, declaring that the "head of any executive department or agency may exempt from the hiring freeze any positions that it deems necessary to meet national security or public safety responsibilities." I understand the Bureau of Land Management in Arizona and other southwestern states is currently preparing to hire the seasonal employees that are crucial to their wildfire-related activities. After I raised this issue to Department of Agriculture, the Department exempted several critical public safety related positions from the hiring freeze. I urge you to similarly either clarify that Department of the Interior seasonal employees are necessary for public safety or ask that you seek an exemption from the Director of the Office of Personnel Management for these seasonal employees.

I thank you in advance for your continued time and attention to these issues. As always, I ask that this matter be handled in strict accordance with all applicable agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeff Flake", is written over a horizontal line.

JEFF FLAKE

United States Senator