



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

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Open Letter to Congress: Uphold the Constitution and Stop the Unlawful Dismantling of the U.S. Forest Service

Dear Members of Congress:

At the end of March, the Trump Administration announced what it calls a “reorganization” of the U.S. Forest Service. In reality this is not a reorganization; it is a dismantling of a 121-year-old institution that manages 193 million acres of public land, an area larger than the state of Texas.

This action is both reckless and illegal.

The Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations law explicitly prohibited using appropriated funds for reorganization activities without prior notice and approval. Yet this sweeping overhaul—eliminating regional offices, consolidating research infrastructure, and replacing career expertise with political appointees—was announced unilaterally, without the transparency, notice, or authorization required by law. This is a direct challenge to Congress’s constitutional authority under Article I, particularly its power of the purse.

If Congress does not act now, it will be conceding that its laws, appropriations, and oversight responsibilities can be ignored at will.

This Is Not Reform—It Is Irreversible Damage to our Country’s Greatest Resources

The Administration’s plan would:

- Eliminate all regional offices that serve as the backbone of local coordination for wildfire response, forest management, and interagency operations.
- Close 57 research facilities across 31 states, dismantling decades of place-based science that cannot be replicated elsewhere.
- Jeopardize the Congressionally mandated Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program, in place since 1928, which underpins national forest data, climate reporting, and industry forecasting.
- Destroy 82 “experimental forests” that would erase generations of irreplaceable research on wildlife habitat, climate, wildfire, timber, and ecosystems, research that cannot be recreated elsewhere.
- Accelerate the loss of scientific expertise, with over 20% of Ph.D.-level researchers already gone because of reckless staff-reduction initiatives.

This is not efficiency. It is the destruction of institutional knowledge, scientific capacity, and operational readiness.

A Direct Threat and Theft of Public Lands and Public Access

This dismantling creates a clear pathway for transferring federal lands to state and private control without the consent of Congress or the American people. Federal stewardship ensures balanced use: conservation, recreation, and responsible economic activity.

Make no mistake: If this “reorganization” is carried out, that balance will be lost. The American public—**your constituents**—should expect:

- Reduced access to public lands, including favorite hunting and recreational areas
- Increased privatization and commercial exploitation of public assets
- Loss of protections for natural resources held in trust for future generations

No administration has the authority to give away public assets. That authority rests with Congress and, ultimately, with the American people it serves.

A Predictable Collapse of Wildfire and Emergency Response

The Administration claims that firefighters are exempt from these changes. That claim is misleading.

Wildfire response depends on an entire ecosystem of trained personnel, including planners, scientists, logistics specialists, and incident command staff. Hundreds of these individuals hold critical certifications known as “red cards,” which allow them to work alongside federal wildland firefighters as militia during large-scale fire response. When thousands leave rather than relocate—which is virtually certain given the history of similar efforts—those critical skills and qualifications go with them. The result will not be a streamlined system. Rather, it will be hollowed out and unable to respond when the American people need it most. State and local responders are already dangerously stretched thin and cannot be expected to fill the void created by a hollowed-out U.S. Forest Service. This dismantling will increase wildfire costs, forcing agencies to rely on far more expensive contractors and overstretched cooperators.

Congress Must Act Immediately

This is a test of whether Congress will enforce its own laws as required by the Constitution.

We urge Congress to:

- **Immediately halt all reorganization activity** until statutory notification and approval requirements are met.
- **Conduct oversight hearings** to determine the legal authority, funding sources, and impacts on congressionally mandated programs.
- **Direct a Government Accountability Office investigation** into the cost, legality, and workforce impact of this action.
- **Refer potential violations of appropriations law and the Anti-Deficiency Act** to the appropriate oversight bodies, including criminal referrals as needed.

Congress has both the authority and the obligation to act. Failure to do so would set a dangerous precedent: the Executive Branch may unilaterally dismantle federal agencies, ignore appropriations law, and dispose of public assets without consequence.

The Bottom Line: Do Your Job!

The Constitution does not permit Congress to remain silent. This is not a policy disagreement; it is a constitutional breach. Stand up for the authority you were given and are obligated to protect. Enforce the law you passed and protect the public assets entrusted to your care. Anything less is a surrender of your duty.

Sincerely,



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