

United States Senate

August 23, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
US Department of Agriculture
Office of the Secretary
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write in support of Montana Governor Steve Bullock's request that your Department allow for the maximum use of safe and effective resources to combat wildfires on federal lands. Specifically, I urge you to thoughtfully reconsider the current prohibition on the use of Montana's UH-1H helicopters.

As emphasized by Governor Bullock, UH-1H helicopters have a strong safety record and have been proven to provide a critical capability in the initial attack phase of combating wildfires. I certainly understand your determination to uphold the safety of pilots and the public, but I am not convinced that the current prohibition is warranted or prudent. As Montana and the nation confront one of the worst fire seasons in recent memory, I urge your Department to reexamine the current policy with respect to the UH-1H and modify existing regulations such that all safe and reliable assets are available and utilized as needed.

Thank you for your timely consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Daines". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and the last name "Daines" clearly legible.

STEVE DAINES
United States Senator (MT)