

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 4, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge your immediate consideration of Governor Michael Dunleavy's request for a Major Disaster declaration under Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, to support Alaska's recovery from a severe earthquake and its thousands of aftershocks. The impact on Alaskan families, homes, businesses, schools and infrastructure is extensive and federal assistance is essential to help our constituents recover in the wake of this destructive event and mitigate against future catastrophes.

On November 30, 2018, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake located seven miles north of Anchorage produced widespread destruction and severe damage to major highways and important public roads, bridges, and rail infrastructure; widespread power, water, and communication disruption; structural collapse and resulting fires to several buildings; and severe damage to private homes, personal property, and businesses. Since that time Alaskans have been rattled by thousands of aftershocks, the first of which followed the main earthquake by minutes; the most recent of which, registering at 4.3, occurred on January 2, 2019.

Alaskans are resilient. Nowhere was this more evident than in the actions of our state and local emergency management teams and first responder and public works personnel in the hours after the earthquake. Working day and night to ensure that our communities were safe and that utilities, services and major infrastructure were operational as soon as possible, these public servants were instrumental in mitigating the immediate impact of the earthquake on Alaskans. However, there is much more that needs to be done. Governor Dunleavy indicated in his request that the damage was of such severity and scale that additional federal assistance is necessary to supplement the actions of our State agencies. Though the spring thaw may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the extent of the damage, it is crucial that Alaska has the resources necessary to continue the process of rebuilding.

It is also important to remember that the earthquake affected more than infrastructure; it affected and continues to affect Alaska's people. Some Alaskans lost their homes, while others discover with each aftershock that the impact to the structural integrity of their homes is more severe. Many lost personal property. The psychological impact of persistent aftershocks has increased the demand for behavioral health services. Damage to some commercial properties, like the high rise Westmark Hotel in downtown Anchorage, has displaced workers who are now in need of disaster unemployment benefits. The Small Business Administration is awaiting a decision on whether a Major Disaster will be declared before it opens up disaster recovery loans to small businesses.

We are grateful for the prompt attention you and members of your cabinet have provided to the state in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake – including the issuance of an emergency declaration. Subsequently, we hope that you approve Governor Dunleavy’s request with immediacy given the scope of the damage and overall impact on our constituents. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

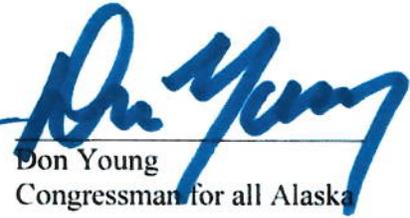
Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator



Dan Sullivan
U.S. Senator



Don Young
Congressman for all Alaska