

United States Senate

August 27, 2018

The Honorable Linda McMahon, Administrator
Small Business Administration
409 Third Street, SW, Suite 7900
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator McMahon:

I write today to bring the Small Business Administration's (SBA) focus to the wildfires that are taking place in Northwest Montana and the devastating effects these fires can have on small businesses in my state. Within the last several weeks, several Montana counties have begun to see thousands of acres burn, with many of these fires continuing to rage on, including the devastating Howe Ridge fire in Glacier National Park. As a result, I have heard from small businesses who are very concerned about their livelihood. These fires create significant challenges for small business in rural communities across Northwest Montana who rely on an already short tourist season. Small businesses, particularly in the retail and hospitality sector, rely heavily on economic activity created by tourism and as you can imagine, these devastating fires, are already having a devastating impact on their bottom lines. That is why it is so important that the SBA has a Disaster Loan Assistance Program. Your programs are an important tool for small businesses looking to survive situations like this. And it is why I am calling on your agency to cut bureaucratic red tape for those looking to apply and make sure folks know they have access to these programs.

Small businesses are the heartbeat of rural Montana's economy. These businesses provide good paying jobs and they serve customers in an efficient manner. In times of crisis, these businesses cannot waste their time wrestling with overly bureaucratic and costly application processes. During last year's fire season, I heard from small businesses that the SBA's programs were overly difficult to qualify for and were failing to address the needs of disaster stricken areas in Montana. That is why I am encouraging you to get a head start this year to ensure that this does not happen again as fires continue to burn in Montana. I would also ask that you prioritize Montana businesses as they go through the application process and at the same time, put in place an outreach plan that allows these small businesses to know about your programs.

I appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you, as we help small businesses in Montana recover from these natural disasters.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester