

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Cameron Hamilton  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Administrator Hamilton:

We write to express our serious concern with the Administration's immediate cancellation of all in-person first responder training courses at the U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA) National Fire Academy (NFA) and the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), collocated at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in Emmitsburg, Maryland.<sup>1</sup> According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) March 7th announcement, classes were canceled to review NFA and EMI "programs and spending to ensure alignment with Administration priorities."<sup>2</sup> This action undermines first responder public safety and potentially poses an equal threat public safety.

Described as "the American fire service war college,"<sup>3</sup> the NFA provides critical training and education programs. Tens of thousands of career and volunteer firefighters from departments across the country benefit from these courses annually.<sup>4</sup> The EMI provides training for thousands of federal, state, and local emergency response officials each year, implementing the National Response Framework and National Incident Management System.<sup>5</sup> The Academy and Institute gather leading experts and first responders to train with stress-tested technology, share best practices, develop innovative emergency response methods, and enhance public safety. Programs at the NETC include disaster preparedness, emergency operations, fire prevention, arson and explosion investigation, wildfire response, firefighter health and safety, and leadership development.<sup>6</sup>

Congress created the NFA through the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 to "advance the professional development of fire service personnel."<sup>7</sup> In 2017, an overwhelming majority of Academy students reported that their coursework helped improve their individual skills and enhanced their local fire department's readiness.<sup>8</sup> In Fiscal Year 2023, more than 40,000 firefighters participated in NFA courses. After participating in these courses, 90 percent of supervisors shared that their firefighters were better prepared to respond to emergencies as a result of their training at the Academy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fema-national-fire-academy-cources-cancellation/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thedailybeast.com/donald-trump-once-again-defies-federal-judge-ruling-on-fema/>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.firerescue1.com/fema/this-is-a-travesty-fire-service-leaders-react-to-nfa-training-cancellations>

<sup>4</sup> [https://science.house.gov/\\_cache/files/f/1/f11aefa4-eccc-4028-ad6c-d62ba5c787cb/C527F36E518F73D2351710763D9855FF.hhrg-115-sy15-wstate-doniceal-20170712.pdf](https://science.house.gov/_cache/files/f/1/f11aefa4-eccc-4028-ad6c-d62ba5c787cb/C527F36E518F73D2351710763D9855FF.hhrg-115-sy15-wstate-doniceal-20170712.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://training.fema.gov/history.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa/courses/on-campus/>

<sup>7</sup> 15 U.S.C. § 2206(a)

<sup>8</sup> [https://science.house.gov/\\_cache/files/f/1/f11aefa4-eccc-4028-ad6c-d62ba5c787cb/C527F36E518F73D2351710763D9855FF.hhrg-115-sy15-wstate-doniceal-20170712.pdf](https://science.house.gov/_cache/files/f/1/f11aefa4-eccc-4028-ad6c-d62ba5c787cb/C527F36E518F73D2351710763D9855FF.hhrg-115-sy15-wstate-doniceal-20170712.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024\\_0320\\_federal\\_emergency\\_management\\_agency.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024_0320_federal_emergency_management_agency.pdf)

Without the services of the NFA and EMI, local departments will lose access to key tools and knowledge necessary to effectively respond to emergencies of all kinds and efficiently manage their agencies. Course offerings at the NFA and EMI are unique, supplementing, rather than duplicating, state-led certification and professional development programs. Local fire departments often lack the resources to provide specialized education for their first responders. Through the NFA and EMI, local agencies can send firefighters and other first responders to Emmitsburg for accessible, affordable courses. Additionally, courses are offered across the country at state fire training academies to reach first responders who cannot make the trip. By offering training that States cannot or do not offer to their firefighters, the NETC stands alone as the national hub of innovative, lifesaving emergency response methods.

At a time when wildfires have ravaged—and continue to threaten—communities from Hawaii to California and the Carolinas, the collaboration and education managed by the NFA has never been more important. Recently, the Academy held a course on wildfire investigation, led by experienced professionals alongside experts from the U.S. Forest Service and CAL FIRE. Canceling critical courses like this one, even if the suspension is temporary, will mean that our communities will be left with fewer defenses against devastating wildfires.

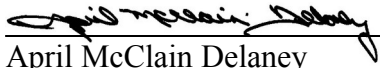
Given the importance of the programs at the NETC and the drastic impacts on local fire departments across the country, we request your immediate and comprehensive consideration in responding to the following questions:

1. What criteria was used to determine that the NFA's and EMI's classes would be canceled?
2. The rationale that FEMA used to justify the cancellation was to review programs to ensure that they aligned with "Administration priorities." How long will FEMA's review process take?
  - a. Further, what criteria will be used to conduct the review?
3. The cancellation notice was sent on the afternoon of Friday, March 7th, after travel arrangements and hotel reservations for future classes had been made. To make matters worse, students from Hawaii were on flights to Maryland when the announcement was made. Will local fire departments be reimbursed for lost expenses associated with impacted classes?
4. We have heard reports that firefighters who were enrolled in courses scheduled to continue into and beyond the week of March 10<sup>th</sup> were told to leave campus immediately upon the cancellation order. Will these students and their local fire departments be reimbursed for all expenses related to courses that were wrongfully and prematurely terminated?
5. On March 6<sup>th</sup>, Judge John McConnell of the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island issued a preliminary injunction that prohibits the freezing of federal funds and related activities. What impact will this order have on the determination to cancel NFA and EMI courses?

Firefighters and other first responders lay their lives on the line every day for our communities. The abrupt cancellation of courses has affected dozens of firefighters, educators, and local departments that rely on the National Fire Academy's and Emergency Management Institute's resources, classes, and expertise to promote safe and effective fire prevention, enhance firefighter safety, and reduce the loss of life and property to fire, floods, and other natural disasters. We call on the Administration to reverse course and reinstate these critical classes for first responders.

We request your prompt and detailed response to the questions outlined above no later than March 26th, 2025.

Sincerely,



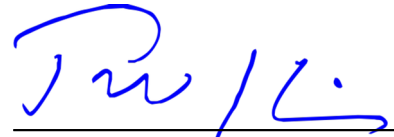
April McClain Delaney  
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



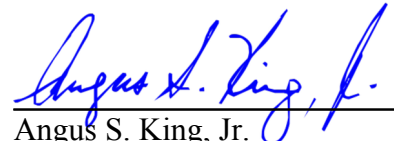
Angela Alsobrooks  
United States Senator



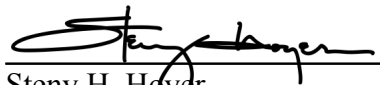
Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



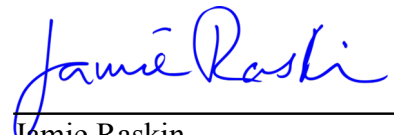
Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



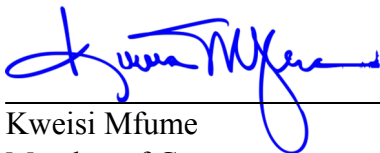
Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



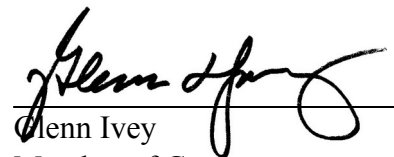
Steny H. Hoyer  
Member of Congress



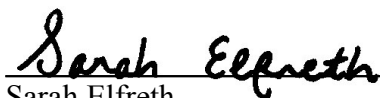
Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



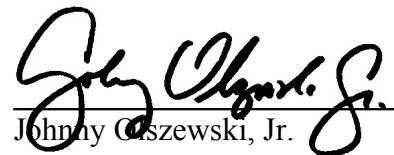
Kweisi Mfume  
Member of Congress



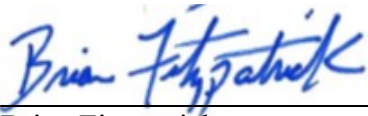
Glenn Ivey  
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfreth  
Member of Congress



Johnny Giszewski, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress



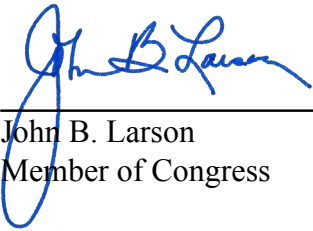
Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



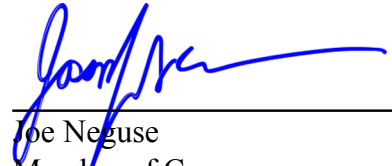
Angie Craig  
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



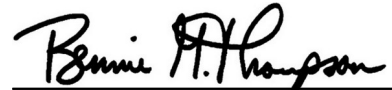
John B. Larson  
Member of Congress



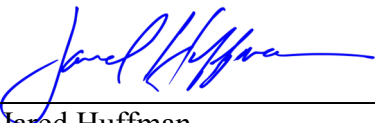
Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle  
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Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



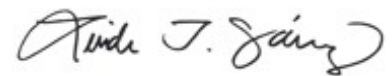
Jared Huffman  
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Mike Thompson  
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



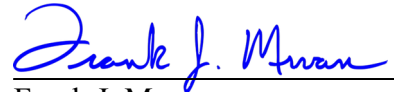
Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



Kristen McDonald Rivet  
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Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



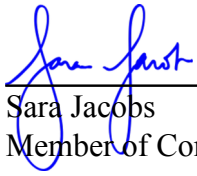
Frank J. Mrvan  
Member of Congress



Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress




Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress



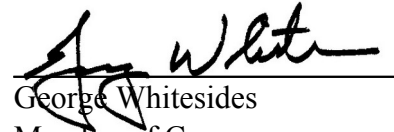
Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley  
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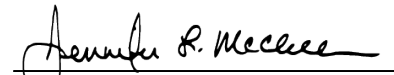
Suhas Subramanyam  
Member of Congress



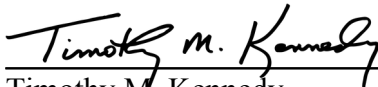
George Whitesides  
Member of Congress



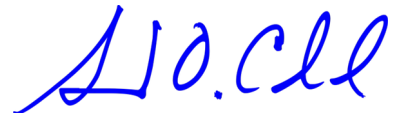
Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



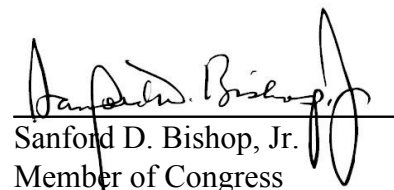
Timothy M. Kennedy  
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Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



Laura A. Gillen  
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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
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Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress



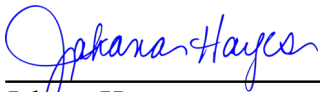
Ed Case  
Member of Congress



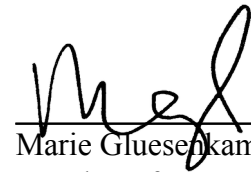
Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress



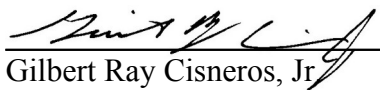
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



Marie Gluesenkamp Perez  
Member of Congress



Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



JM Tokuda  
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress




Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress

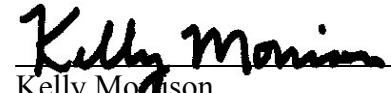


Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress




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Eugene Simon Vindman  
Member of Congress




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Kelly Morrison  
Member of Congress



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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



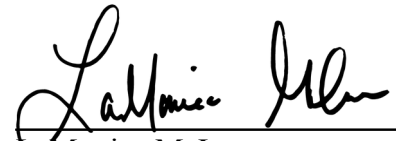
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Lauren Underwood  
Member of Congress




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André Carson  
Member of Congress




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LaMonica McIver  
Member of Congress




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Gabe Amo  
Member of Congress



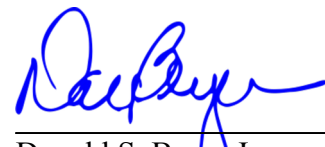
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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



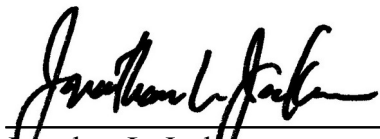
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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress




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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Jonathan L. Jackson  
Member of Congress



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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress