

HELP SUSTAIN AERIAL FIREFIGHTERS

An aerial firefighting plane, white with red accents, is shown in flight, dropping a large volume of red fire retardant. The plane is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image. Below it, a thick, billowing plume of red retardant falls towards a wildfire. The wildfire is visible at the bottom of the image, with bright orange and yellow flames against a dark, smoky background. The overall scene is dramatic and emphasizes the scale of the firefighting effort.

Lives and Resources Depend On It!

Dear Colleague:

As wildfires continue to ravage the West, air tanker pilots and crew are on the front lines taking incredible risks in order to save lives and natural resources. There are only approximately 300 aerial firefighters and crew in the nation, and yet we lost a half-dozen of them in last year's devastating fire season.

Join me in helping the families of these fallen aerial firefighters by making these pilots eligible for Public Safety Officer Benefits (PSOB). PSOB is a program administered by the Department of Justice that provides a one-time lump sum payment of roughly \$260,000 to surviving family members of those individuals classified as public safety officers, such as law enforcement. Sadly, these brave air tanker pilots are not recognized as public safety officers under the program simply because they work for private aerial firefighting companies that contract with the federal government.

Air tanker pilots are often the first line of defense in fighting wildfires and we need each and every one of them. They serve the greater good of the public in every sense of the word.

I will soon introduce legislation classifying aerial firefighters as public safety officers and therefore eligible for PSOB. They have become too often the unsung heroes and they, along with their families, deserve our support. If you would like further information or would like to cosponsor, please contact Jonni McCrann of my staff at 52311.

Sincerely,

Barbara Cubin
Member of Congress