

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 12, 2019

The Honorable Donald Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

As members of the South Dakota congressional delegation, we write to express our full support of President Julian Bear Runner's request for a major disaster declaration for the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation as a result of a severe winter storm and flooding that occurred March 13 through March 26, 2019.

President Bear Runner's disaster declaration request explains that the storms caused substantial damage to public infrastructure as well as the tragic loss of two lives. This severe winter storm brought widespread blizzard conditions with wind gusts of 70 mph and upwards of 18 inches of snow. Warming conditions after the snowfall, combined with significant ice cover on rivers and streams, resulted in catastrophic flooding, washing out tribal roads, bridges, and culverts. In total, more than 1,500 tribal residents were rescued by boat or utility tracked vehicles throughout the event. Tribal residents are still unable to drive from their homes in some areas and are relying on tribal emergency management to deliver food and water. Your approval of the request for a disaster declaration will accelerate recovery across the affected region.

We applaud the work of tribal leadership in response to this weather event. Their efforts to provide emergency shelters, medical supplies, generators, and other services prevented the widespread power outages from having greater negative impact. However, the cost to provide these services, as well as the expected costs for cleanup, imposes financial hardship on tribal operations. As President Bear Runner indicates, the storms caused severe damage such that federal assistance is necessary. This determination was reached on the basis of the preliminary damage assessment completed by the Oglala Sioux Tribe in cooperation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

We respectfully request you declare a major disaster for the Oglala Sioux Tribe and instruct federal agencies to expedite the delivery of all forms of federal disaster assistance for which the tribe is eligible based upon that declaration. Further, we request you consider granting the cost share adjustment requested by President Bear Runner due to the financial hardship on tribal operations. We would be pleased to offer any assistance you may require in fulfilling this request.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if we can provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
United States Senator



M. MICHAEL ROUNDS
United States Senator



DUSTY JOHNSON
Member of Congress