

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 26, 2023

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

Dear President Biden:

We write today in strong support of the Oglala Sioux Tribe's (OST) major disaster declaration request for the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This declaration would assist in recovery efforts from significant winter weather events occurring from December 12 to December 26, 2022.

As you are aware, the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013 allows federally recognized Native American tribes to directly request an emergency declaration from the President through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Administrator. We understand leaders from the OST worked with technical assistance (TA) officials at the FEMA Region 8 Office to provide all necessary information for the declaration request. We would be pleased to offer any assistance that you may require when considering this request.

Much of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation experienced extreme blizzard conditions during the specified timeframe. Some areas of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation received up to three feet of snow, with drifts up to 20 feet high. As a result, hundreds of families in tribal communities were unable to access critical supplies, including medications and propane and firewood to heat homes. In addition to snowfall, wind chill temperatures dropped to -50° F in some tribal communities.

As the disaster declaration request indicates, tribal officials responded to the storms using resources immediately available to them. The emergency operations conducted by the tribe reduced the storms' impact and accelerated the recovery of tribal communities. Despite these efforts, a number of tribal members remained trapped in their homes and were unable to access necessary supplies. In an effort to assist tribal members in need, officials at the OST worked to provide transportation, heating fuel and basic necessities such as food. To address emergency costs and damages, the OST is requesting emergency protective measures and permanent work (Categories B-G) under the Public Assistance (PA) program.

Given these challenges, we respectfully request full and fair consideration of a presidential disaster declaration from the OST. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if we can provide you with additional information.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of these requests.


Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
United States Senator



M. MICHAEL ROUNDS
United States Senator



DUSTY JOHNSON
Member of Congress