

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 22, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin  
Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

We write to express deep concern about the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposal to eliminate the 2009 Endangerment Finding and what that will mean for Washington and our constituents' health and safety. We urge you to maintain the Endangerment Finding and protect the health and welfare of Washingtonians and communities in all parts of the country.

The Endangerment Finding requires the EPA to protect people from the pollution that causes climate change and its impacts. Denying the danger of climate change cannot change the facts: pollution from fossil fuels is heating our planet, making extreme weather disasters more severe, and costing us all—especially the most vulnerable.<sup>1</sup>

The threats posed by extreme weather worsened by climate change have never been more dire or clearer to our constituents. Rising global temperatures due to climate change contribute to more intense wildfires, worse droughts, and more extreme heat, among other impacts.<sup>2</sup> Washington state in particular faces a variety of climate impacts, including extreme weather, heat waves, drought, wildfires, sea level rise, and flooding. Among 3,000 counties, King County, WA was ranked as one of the 50 least-prepared counties for climate change, and is expected to lose \$774 million annually resulting from wildfires, drought, flooding, and other climate disasters.<sup>3</sup>

Over the past five years, Washingtonians experienced 11 extreme weather events that caused \$1 billion or more in damages and over 1,200 lives were lost.<sup>4</sup> For example, an extremely severe

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<sup>1</sup> US EPA, *Climate Change and the Health of Socially Vulnerable People*, (May 2025) <https://www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/climate-change-and-health-socially-vulnerable-people>.

<sup>2</sup> *Extreme Weather and Climate Change*, NASA (Oct. 23, 2024) <https://science.nasa.gov/climate-change/extreme-weather/>.

<sup>3</sup> Christine Clarridge, *Study: Seattle area is unprepared for climate disasters*, Axios (June. 14, 2024) <https://www.axios.com/local/seattle/2024/06/14/king-county-unprepared-climate-disasters>.

<sup>4</sup> *U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters*, NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (2025) <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/state-summary/WA>.

heat wave in 2021 killed about 400 people in Washington state.<sup>5</sup> This was followed by two more deadly heat waves in 2023 and 2024. In 2024, the heat wave broke Seattle's record temperature.<sup>6</sup>

While Washington works to adapt to extreme heat, wildfires are also intensifying. Climate chaos will exacerbate drought conditions,<sup>7</sup> and as Washington gets drier, wildfires will burn more land and homes, and take more lives. We are already living with these impacts: in 2021, an Eastern Washington wildfire destroyed at least 185 structures and caused a fatality.<sup>8</sup> Even short-term exposure leads to alarming health impacts, in worst cases leading to bronchitis and heart failure,<sup>9</sup> and exposure to wildfire smoke is only expected to increase.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Washington also faces the impacts of sea level rise and worsening storms, both of which contribute to flooding and coastal storm surges.<sup>11</sup> Coastal areas are eroding quickly<sup>12</sup> and increasing extreme precipitation cause significant storm surge and flooding issues. Flooding and extreme weather will disproportionately impact the members of Washington's Indigenous communities and more than two dozen tribes, whose health infrastructure, cultural resources, and economies will face some of the most severe climate impacts.<sup>13</sup>

By eliminating the Endangerment Finding, the administration is undermining critical protections against climate pollution: clean car and truck standards, power plant rules, oil and gas rules, landfill rules, and more. We urge you to maintain the Endangerment Finding and protect the health and welfare of Washingtonians and communities in all parts of the country.

Sincerely,

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<sup>5</sup> Eilís O'Neill, *The 2021 heat wave 'was a wake-up call.' But Seattle's still unprepared for high temps*, KUOW (Jul. 25, 2022) <https://www.kuow.org/stories/the-2021-heat-wave-was-a-wake-up-call-but-seattle-s-still-unprepared-for-high-temps>.

<sup>6</sup> Seattle Times Staff, *Weather updates: Seattle breaks more record highs; Olympia hits more than 100°*, The Seattle Times (Jul. 9, 2024) <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/weather-updates-seattle-area-braces-for-the-hottest-day-of-2024/>.

<sup>7</sup> "3. Observed Trends and Future Projections." n.d. <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/1201004e.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> *Washington state wildfires leaves one dead and nearly 200 structures destroyed*, The Guardian (Aug. 19, 2023) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/aug/20/washington-state-wildfire-leaves-one-dead-and-nearly-200-structures-destroyed>.

<sup>9</sup> US EPA, 2019, "Health Effects Attributed to Wildfire Smoke." US EPA. August 13, 2019. <https://www.epa.gov/wildfire-smoke-course/health-effects-attributed-wildfire-smoke>.

<sup>10</sup> Annie Doubleday, Lianne Sheppard *et al.*, *Wildfire smoke exposure and emergency department visits in Washington State*, University of Washington (May 2023) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10213826/>.

<sup>11</sup> The Guardian, *Washington state wildfires*

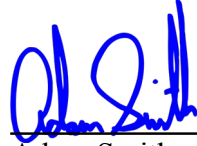
<sup>12</sup> Claire Carlson, Julia Tilton, *As Erosion and Floods Swallow Buildings, Washington's Coastal Communities Strain to Adapt*, Climate Central (Jan. 10, 2025) <https://www.climatecentral.org/partnership-journalism/erosion-and-floods-swallow-buildings-washingtons-coastal-communities>.

<sup>13</sup> Ryan Hasert, Chandler Countryman, *et al.*, *Climate Adaptation Barriers and Needs Experienced by Northwest Coastal Tribes: Key Findings from Tribal Listening Sessions*, University of Washington Climate Impacts Group, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, and Washington Sea Grant (Aug 2024) [https://cig.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/08/Adaptation-Barriers-NW-Coastal-Tribes\\_2024.pdf](https://cig.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/08/Adaptation-Barriers-NW-Coastal-Tribes_2024.pdf).



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



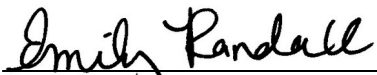
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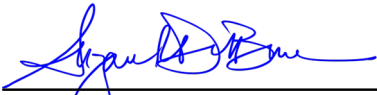
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