

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

October 10, 2025

The Honorable Karen Bass
Mayor
City of Los Angeles
200 North Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mayor Bass:

In January 2025, a number of wildfires, including the Palisades fire, devastated Los Angeles County, California. These fires caused billions of dollars in damage to homes and businesses, and tragically resulted in loss of life.¹ Public reports have raised questions about Los Angeles's wildfire preparations and the response to the January 2025 wildfires, including the Palisades fire. For example, even though a suspect was charged this week with starting the Lachman fire, the Palisades fire appears to have been caused by a reignition of the Lachman fire, even though Los Angeles officials stated that the fire was "fully contained."² Additionally, a July 2025 preliminary report issued by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power ("LADWP"³) identified issues with critical water systems necessary for fire suppression, including loss of pressure to fire hydrants.⁴ And there have also been other allegations that the mismanagement of reservoirs led to a lack of water on the day that residents in Los Angeles County needed it most.⁵

Pursuant to Senate Resolution 94 (119th Cong.), the United States Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (the "Subcommittee") is conducting a review of Los Angeles's wildfire mitigation and suppression efforts, including the response to the Palisades fire. In order to assist the Subcommittee in its review, please provide the following information and records. Unless otherwise stated, the period of time covered by this request is from February 1, 2022, to present.

¹ Shiyun Li and William Yu, Economic Impact of Los Angeles Wildfires, UCLA Anderson School of Management, Mar. 3, 2025, available at <https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/about/centers/ucla-anderson-forecast/economic-impact-los-angeles-wildfires>; Nadine Yousif, *More than 400 indirect deaths linked to LA wildfires, study suggests*, BBC, Aug. 6, 2025, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx29wjg3vz2o>.

² Richard Winton, *Florida man 'maliciously' started Palisades fire, then tried to cover his tracks, authorities allege*, LA Times, Oct. 8, 2025, available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-10-08/palisades-fire-arrest>.

³ For purposes of this letter LADWP shall also include the Board of Water and Power Commissioners.

⁴ Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, LADWP Palisades Fire Water System Preliminary Report, July 3, 2025, available at <https://www.ladwpnews.com/ladwp-palisades-fire-water-system-preliminary-report-july-3-2025/>.

⁵ First Amended Complaint at 15, Grigsby, et al. v. City of Los Angeles, et al., No. 25-STCV-00832 (L.A. Super. Ct., Jan. 13, 2025).

1. All records⁶ referring or relating to wildfire preparation, suppression, and response between December 28, 2024, and the present, including but not limited to the response to the Palisades and Lachman fires.
2. All records referring or relating to proposed budget cuts and workforce reductions at the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD).
3. All records referring or relating to the Palisades and Eaton fires, including but not limited to:
 - a. Communications between and among employees at the Los Angeles Mayor's Office;
 - b. Any after-action or other assessment of the cause of the Palisades and Eaton fires, including all communications related to suspected non-natural or man-made causes;
 - c. All communications referring or related to Jonathan Rinderknecht⁷; and
 - d. Communications with residents of the Pacific Palisades.
4. All records referring or relating to any reports or investigations of arson, burglary, theft, or looting in fire-affected areas, including but not limited to communications with law enforcement or emergency management agencies.
5. All records referring or relating to the Santa Ynez Reservoir and the Chautauqua Reservoir (also known as the "Palisades Reservoir"), including but not limited to all communications with the LADWP regarding the closure of the Santa Ynez Reservoir.
6. All records referring or relating to the February 21, 2025, removal of Kristin M. Crowley from her role as Fire Chief of the LAFD.
7. All records referring or relating to the creation or oversight of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) hiring policies for the Mayor's Office, LAFD, and the LADWP from May 1, 2020, to present, including Mayor Eric Garcetti's Executive Directive No. 27 and the budgetary impact of DEI programs or initiatives.
8. All records referring or relating to your travel to the Republic of Ghana from January 4 to January 8, 2025,⁸ including but not limited to:

⁶ "Records" include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (such as texts, emails, email attachments, and any other electronically-created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).

⁷ On October 8, 2025, the Acting U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California announced that Jonathan Rinderknecht had been arrested and charged with "maliciously starting what became the Palisades Fire." See Acting U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli (@USAttyEssayli), X (Oct. 8, 2025, 12:01 pm), <https://x.com/USAttyEssayli/status/1975954598201536880>.

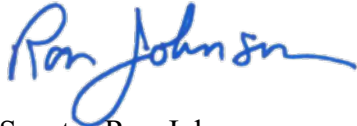
⁸ Julia Ingram, Rhona Tarrant & Joanne Stocker, *Timeline Shows What We Know About L.A. Mayor Karen Bass' Trip to Ghana as Fire Crisis Developed*, CBS News, Jan. 15, 2025, available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/la-fires-mayor-karen-bass-trip-ghana-timeline/>.

- a. All risk assessments, staff recommendations, or warnings regarding potential emergency response conflicts;
 - b. All records referring or relating to identifying which city official(s) were designated to exercise mayoral or emergency management authority during the period of the Ghana trip;
 - c. All communications discussing the fire response and plan in the context of your absence from Los Angeles;
 - d. All communications between the Mayor's Office and external entities, including the White House, referring or relating to the trip's purpose, agenda, or scheduling;
 - e. All communications relating to the U.S. military transportation back to Los Angeles; and
 - f. All briefing materials, talking points, or post-trip summaries referring or relating to the Ghana travel, including any references to the trip's timing, cost, or public perception following the January 2025 wildfires.
9. All records referring or relating to redevelopment in fire-affected areas, including but not limited to:
 - a. building or land-use permits, applications, or approvals;
 - b. proposed or enacted changes to regulations;
 - c. proposed or enacted zoning modifications or variances;
 - d. proposals for or approvals of low-income housing developments;
 - e. proposals for or approvals of multifamily housing developments; and
 - f. the construction of public transportation stations.
10. All records referring or relating to the records retention, storage, and deletion policies and practices of the Mayor's Office, including but not limited to all records relating to the alleged deletion, alteration, or destruction of any official records or communications.
11. All records referring or relating to Steve Soboroff's appointment and resignation as chief recovery officer.⁹
12. All communications referring or relating to wildfire prevention, mitigation, or suppression, including but not limited to the Palisades fire, between the Mayor's Office and any employee or official with the following entities:
 - a. LADWP;
 - b. Los Angeles City Council;
 - c. Office of the Governor of California;
 - d. LAFD;
 - e. Los Angeles County Fire Department; and
 - f. Any federal agency or department.

⁹ Julia Wick, *Steve Soboroff bows out as L.A. fire recovery czar; with some parting shots*, LA TIMES (Apr. 11, 2025), <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-04-11/steve-soboroff-bows-out-as-fire-recovery-czar>.

Please produce this information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on October 24, 2025. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Subcommittee staff at (202) 224-3721 and (202) 224-0909. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ron" and last name "Johnson" clearly legible.

Senator Ron Johnson
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee
on Investigations

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rick" and last name "Scott" clearly legible.

Senator Rick Scott
Member
Permanent Subcommittee
on Investigations

cc: The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations