

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 6, 2018

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Budget for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), we strongly urge you to include robust funding for the development, operation and maintenance of the West Coast Earthquake Early Warning system (EEW) for the U.S. West Coast, also known as ShakeAlert. With increased federal investment for ShakeAlert, the U.S. is making steady progress toward having an operational system that will help protect lives and enhance infrastructure resilience. Congress has been steadfast in its support for the system, and we need the Administration to demonstrate its support for the system as well.

The USGS has been working with the California Institute of Technology; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Washington; the University of Oregon; the University of Nevada, Reno; Central Washington University, and state emergency services agencies to deploy the system. This fall, ShakeAlert reached a significant milestone: it became available for public use via designated pilots. Businesses, organizations, schools, and public entities are now able to become ShakeAlert partners in order to distribute alerts. More than half of the sensors have been installed along the West Coast, and nearly all sensors have been installed in major metropolitan areas, like Los Angeles and the San Francisco / Bay Area.

With concern regarding the heightened risk of a major earthquake resulting from increased seismic activity near the San Andreas Fault, coupled with the prospect of a magnitude 9.0 earthquake along the Pacific Northwest coast, there is public demand for EEW to be fully operational. When major earthquake events occur—and we know it is “when” and not “if”—they have the potential to be the costliest and deadliest disasters the United States has ever faced.

Even with just a few seconds of warning, steps can be taken to prevent casualties and mitigate destruction, including slowing or stopping trains and cars; turning off supplies of oil, natural gas, and chemicals; securing large manufacturing equipment; stopping elevators and opening doors; and securing sensitive computer data.

The effectiveness of EEW largely depends on modern cyber infrastructure, and the number and placement of ground motion sensors to ensure there is adequate coverage wherever an earthquake may hit—and this requires additional resources. Congress recognizes the value of this system and continues to demonstrate its commitment by providing additional resources for ShakeAlert.

To follow through on the funding made by the federal government, as well as growing commitment from states and the private sector, it is critical that this program be properly funded so the West Coast will be prepared for the next catastrophic earthquake. This technology will save lives and reduce the economic impact of an earthquake; it simply needs to be properly funded.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,


Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

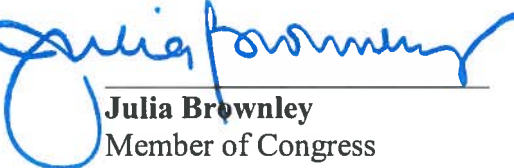

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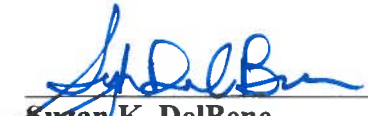

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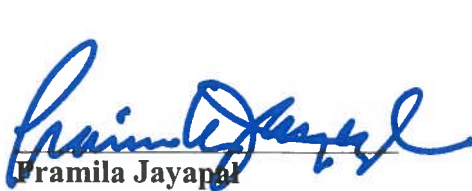

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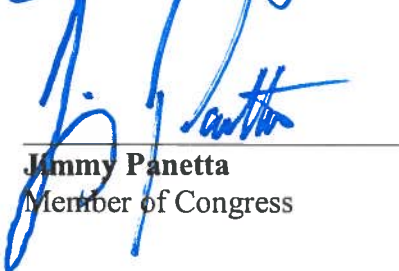

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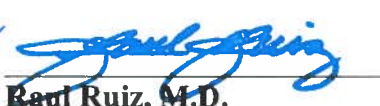

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Cc: The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the Interior

The Honorable Jim Reilly
Director, U.S. Geological Survey