Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott:

We write to express our deep concern regarding the escalating threat of catastrophic wildfires across the nation. The devastating impact on communities is evident, but it is equally critical to recognize the uninsurable risk faced by not-for-profit utilities that serve these areas. As representatives of over five million electric customers across 10 Western states, we are committed to addressing this urgent issue.
The financial peril posed by wildfires to nearby communities and not-for-profit utilities cannot be overstated. These utilities are acutely aware that a single wildfire could lead to both physical devastation and financial ruin and are taking all steps within their control to mitigate the risk of wildfire. Community-owned utilities operate with limited financial resources, necessitating sensible reforms in wildfire management for their survival.

While human-caused sparks may ignite wildfires, the true determinants of destruction lie in extreme weather events, changing environmental conditions, and inadequate land management on federal properties. That is why we commend the House Committee on Agriculture for incorporating provisions from H.R. 6012, the Fire Safe Electrical Corridors Act, into the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024 (Farm Bill). This inclusion allows utilities to remove trees and debris around transmission lines on U.S. Forest Service lands without requiring a timber sale. Such language represents a significant and positive step toward managing wildfire threats effectively by removing fuel for fires.

Additionally, we strongly support Rep. Doug LaMalfa’s amendment, which provides a categorical exclusion for electric utility lines’ right-of-way. This exclusion facilitates vegetation management, facility inspection, and operation and maintenance plans, further empowering utilities to mitigate wildfire risks.

While we recognize that completing the Farm Bill requires further effort, we urge you to consider the impact of these changes on utilities struggling to secure wildfire insurance. As you work to reconcile differences with the U.S. Senate, please count us as a valuable resource on these matters.

Thank you for your commitment to safeguarding communities and supporting not-for-profit utilities. We appreciate the inclusion of both the Fire Safe Electrical Corridors Act and Rep. LaMalfa’s amendment in the House Committee on Agriculture-passed Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

Kurt W. Miller, Executive Director
Northwest Public Power Association

On behalf of:
Alaska Power Association
Chelan County Public Utility District
Consumers Power Inc.
Flathead Electric Cooperative
Golden State Power Cooperative
Inland Power
Mason County Public Utility District #1
Northern Wasco County People's Utility District
Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Association
Oregon People's Utility District Association
Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association
Tacoma Power
Trinity Public Utilities District
Washington Public Utility Districts Association
Wyoming’s Electric Cooperatives

cc:  Representative Doug LaMalfa
     Representative Lori Chavez-Deremer
     Representative Andrea Salinas
     Representative Marie Gluesenkamp Perez