

WASHINGTON OFFICE
2244 RAYBURN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-8045
FAX: (202) 225-2772

CHULA VISTA OFFICE
333 F STREET, SUITE A
CHULA VISTA, CA 91910
(619) 422-5963
FAX: (619) 422-7290

EL CENTRO OFFICE
380 NORTH 8TH STREET, #14
EL CENTRO, CA 92243
(760) 312-9900
FAX: (760) 312-9664



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Juan Vargas
51st District, California

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTOR PROTECTION,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CAPITAL MARKETS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING,
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND INSURANCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND MONETARY POLICY

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY,
AND TRADE
MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA,
AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

April 28, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

I am requesting funding for the “San Diego County Twin-Engine Firefighting Helicopter Project” project in fiscal year 2023, in the amount of \$750,000. The entity to receive the funding is the County of San Diego, located at 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101.

San Diego County’s existing helicopters are being aged out and must be replaced. Each one is a single engine helicopter that is built out of a 1970s airframe. Because they are single engine, the helicopters don’t have the ability to drop water at night. The purchase of a twin-engine helicopter allows for firefighting both day and night, and increases the amount of water deployed with each drop. In cases of engine failure, a single engine significantly increases the risk to the crew and anyone being hoisted during a rescue. A twin-engine helicopter can still function and safely land if one of the engines goes out. In rural San Diego County, there are over 100,000 structures in the designated high fire risk area. Over 80% of the area qualifies as a disadvantaged community. These communities have suffered from devastating wildfires and fire risk is only getting more severe. During the past two decades, over 600,000 acres have burned, nearly 5,000 homes have been destroyed, and dozens of lives have been lost.

San Diego County has experienced several catastrophic wildfires over the past two decades. At the time, the 2003 Cedar Fire was the largest and most destructive wildfire in the history of California. The 2007 wildfires lead to the unprecedented evacuation of over 500,000 people. Multiple devastating fires have occurred since then. Although significant investments have been made to better protect lives and the forests, the County is still utilizing outdated single engine helicopters for aerial fire protection. This use of taxpayer funds will bring a twin-engine firefighting helicopter to the County and improve wildfire response capabilities and protection of the forests.

This project has received written support from City of San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria and San Diego County Board of Supervisors Chairman Nathan Fletcher.

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juan Vargas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "V".

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress