

Luján, Fischer introduce legislation to expedite federal cost-sharing relief after natural disasters

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Ben Ray Luján, D-NM., and Deb Fischer, R-Neb., recently introduced the Emergency Conservation Program Improvement Act to expedite producers’ access to federal disaster relief.

The legislation would specifically reform the Emergency Conservation Program and Emergency Forest Restoration Program to provide producers impacted by disasters with the option to receive an up-front cost-share, based on existing USDA estimates. The bill would also adjust eligibility for relief to include any wildfire caused or spread due to natural causes, as well as wildfires caused by the federal government.

Luján explained how the legislation would help New Mexico farmers.

“For generations, New Mexico’s farmers and ranchers have been on the frontline of extreme weather conditions – including drought, wildfires, and flooding – that have disrupted their ability to grow sustainable crops and livestock,” Luján said. “I’m proud to introduce bipartisan legislation that will quickly deliver emergency funds to New Mexico producers impacted by wildfires and other extreme conditions.”

Luján said that he hopes this legislation helps farmers.

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“As our state’s agricultural community continues to recover from wildfires, this legislation will help our farmers and ranchers get back on their feet and continue their recovery,” Luján said.

Fischer commented on how long it can take farmers to see any sort of financial relief from the current federal programs.

“Family farmers and ranchers impacted by wildfires and other horrific natural disasters deserve our help to get back on their feet. Federal relief programs, however, are riddled with long delays and complex bureaucratic paperwork that make it difficult for producers to get aid in a timely fashion,” Fischer said.

She explained that the bill would help farmers get their money faster.

“Our bill would give producers the ability to access some emergency assistance up-front so they can begin the recovery process more quickly,” Fischer said.

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