

Remarks During a Briefing on the Palisades Wildfire in Santa Monica, California
January 8, 2025

The President. Well, the Governor asked for a declaration that provides for everything the Federal Government can do, and I'm prepared to sign it today.

The—folks, the fact is that I've directed DOD—the Department of Defense—to rapidly provide additional firefighting personnel and capabilities. I've also—the California National Guard is adding two Modular Air Fire Fighting Systems units, and two more are being readied by the National Guard—the Nevada National Guard. And four more are coming from Northern—from the Northern Command. And 10 Navy helicopters with water delivery buckets are coming down from San Diego.

We're prepared to do anything and everything as long as it takes to contain these fires and to help reconstruct and make sure we get back to normal. It's going to be a hell of a long way.

The—it's going to take time. But we're in it. The Federal Government is here to stay as long as you need us and everything you need.

Is there anything you've asked that you haven't gotten yet?

Governor Gavin C. Newsom of California. Quite the contrary. Mr. President, just, first of all, that major disaster declaration being approved—next level appreciation on behalf of all the residents here in Southern California.

As the chief said, we had prepositioned assets this weekend in anticipation of these weather events: the complexity of multiple fires; the likelihood these weather events—this wind event would continue over the course of the next many days; impacts of over a thousand structures already that have been destroyed; a hundred-plus thousand people that have been evacuated; lives lost; traditions, lifestyles, places torn asunder. This means the world to us.

And—just publicly, because I think this is important: The President happened to be in the region, in town. It's impossible for me to express the level of appreciation and cooperation we received from the White House and this administration.

So, on behalf of all of us, Mr. President, thank you for being here—and not just being here today. Thank you for being here since the minute of this incident when it was a 10-acre fire less than 24-or-so hours ago. My deep gratitude.

The President. It's astounding what's happened.

There's only one piece of good news. My son lives out here and his wife. Their—they got a notification yesterday that their home is probably burned to the ground. Today it appears that maybe it's still standing. We're not sure.

But the good news is, I'm a great-grandfather as of today. My eldest granddaughter. A 10-pound, 4-ounce baby girl—baby boy.

So I'm going to remember this day for a lot of the wrong reasons. But anyway.

[At this point, several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Q. Mr. President, how are you going to confirm that—

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. at Santa Monica Fire Station No. 5. In his remarks, he referred to his son R. Hunter Biden, daughter-in-law Melissa Cohen Biden, granddaughter Naomi K. Biden Neal, and great-grandson William Brannon Neal IV. Also participating in the briefing were California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Deputy Director of Communications Nick Shuler and Southern Region Chief Mike van Loben Sels, Los Angeles Fire Department Chief Kristin M. Crowley, Los Angeles County Fire Department Chief Anthony C. Marrone, and Los Angeles Police Department Chief Jim McDonnell. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 9.

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