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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

CHRISTOPHER R. HIXON, STAFF DIRECTOR  
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March 27, 2018

Ms. Vicki Christiansen  
Interim Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250-1111

Dear Interim Chief Christiansen:

We write to request information about the actions of Tony Tooke, former chief of the U.S. Forest Service, as well as information about the Forest Service's efforts to address an apparent culture of sexual harassment and misconduct. We appreciate your cooperation with this inquiry.

On March 7, 2018, Chief Tooke left the Forest Service following accusations of widespread sexual harassment at the agency from at least 34 women, including reports of rape, gender discrimination, and retaliation.<sup>1</sup> Media reports also allege that Chief Tooke personally offered a position to a woman with whom he was allegedly having an extramarital affair.<sup>2</sup> These claims follow an established public record of sexual misconduct and gender discrimination at the Forest Service dating back to at least 2008.<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) also recently found that Forest Service employees do not trust the process by which the Forest

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<sup>1</sup> Darryl Fears, "With Tooke's resignation, scandal continues to burn the U.S. Forest Service" Wash.Post (Mar. 8, 2018), available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/03/08/with-tookes-resignation-scandal-continues-to-burn-the-federal-wildfire-suppression-agency/?utm\\_term=.1cae54506d0e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/03/08/with-tookes-resignation-scandal-continues-to-burn-the-federal-wildfire-suppression-agency/?utm_term=.1cae54506d0e); see also Elizabeth Flock and Joshua Barajas, *U.S. Forest Service chief under investigation after complaints of sexual misconduct*, PBS News Hour (Mar. 2, 2018), available at <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/u-s-forest-service-chief-under-investigation-after-complaints-of-sexual-misconduct>; Doreen McCallister, *U.S. Forest Service Chief Resigns Amid Sexual Misconduct Allegations*, NPR (Mar. 8, 2018), available at <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/03/08/591807164/u-s-forest-service-chief-resigns-amid-sexual-misconduct-allegations>; Catherine Bourdreau, *Forest Service chief resigns in wake of sexual misconduct allegations*, Politico (Mar. 7, 2018), available at <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/03/07/forest-service-chief-resigns-misconduct-allegations-395048>.

<sup>2</sup> Fears, *supra* note 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Examining Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination at the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Oversight and Gov't Reform*, 114th Cong. 114-17 (2016), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-114hhrg26179/pdf/CHRG-114hhrg26179.pdf>.

Service investigates allegations of sexual misconduct.<sup>4</sup> News reports state that USDA has engaged an “independent investigator.”<sup>5</sup>

To assist the Committee in examining the Forest Service’s apparent culture of sexual harassment and misconduct, we respectfully request that you provide the following information no later than April 10, 2018:

1. For any allegation of sexual harassment or other misconduct made against Chief Tooke, please provide the following:
  - a. A summary of the allegation;
  - b. The date(s) on which the Forest Service and/or USDA referred the allegation to the USDA OIG, independent investigator, or law-enforcement agency; and
  - c. A copy of any reports or other written productions prepared following an examination of the allegation.
2. Prior to Tooke’s resignation, the Forest Service reportedly emailed staff that “While we have taken significant actions over the past several years to address sexual harassment in the Forest Service, we acknowledge that we have more work to do.”<sup>6</sup>
  - a. Please describe any steps that the Forest Service has already taken in the last five years to address sexual harassment, misconduct, gender discrimination and retaliation; and
  - b. Please provide a timeline of steps the Forest Service intends to take in the next 12 months to address sexual harassment, misconduct, gender discrimination and retaliation.
3. Please explain how the Forest Service will address the findings of the recent OIG report;<sup>7</sup> and
4. Please provide a copy of the Forest Service’s most recent Table of Penalties.

In addition, we request that you arrange a staff-level briefing to discuss these issues to occur no later than April 13, 2018.

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Agric., Office of Inspector Gen., Audit Report 08601-0008-41(1), Forest Service Initiatives to Address Workplace Misconduct—Interim Report (Mar. 2018), *available at* [https://www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/08601-0008-41\(1\).pdf](https://www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/08601-0008-41(1).pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See Flock, *supra* note 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Agric., Office of Inspector Gen., *supra* note 4.

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The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized by Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate “the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of all agencies and departments of the Government.”<sup>8</sup> Additionally, S. Res. 62 (115th Congress) authorizes the Committee to examine “the efficiency and economy of all branches of the Government including the possible existence of fraud, misfeasance, malfeasance, collusion, mismanagement, incompetence, corruption, or unethical practices . . . .”<sup>9</sup>

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please ask your staff to contact Courtney Allen with Chairman Johnson at (202) 224-4751 or Sarah Garcia with Ranking Member McCaskill at (202) 224-1448. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson  
Chairman



Claire McCaskill  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Enclosure

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<sup>8</sup> S. Rule XXV(k); *see also* S. Res. 445, 108th Cong. (2004).

<sup>9</sup> S. Res. 62, § 12, 115th Cong. (2017).