

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 11, 2019

Dr. Robert R. Redfield  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road NE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Dear Dr. Redfield,

The FY 2019 report accompanying the House version of the Labor-HHS Appropriations Bill included language expressing concern over the lack of attention to the northwestern United States with respect to vector-borne diseases. In general, there is significant need for additional data and demographic information on disease ecology and transmission dynamics as well as resources for surveillance, training, preparation and coordination in this region. (H Rept. 115-862, p.39)

A number of significant vector-borne diseases are endemic to this area, including plague, relapsing fever, tick-borne rickettsioses, tick-borne viruses, and West Nile encephalitis. In addition, a number of other vector-borne diseases could be introduced into the region, such as Japanese encephalitis, tick-borne encephalitis and western equine encephalitis. Lyme cases continue to be recorded in the region, so this disease remains a concern as well. The collective public health and economic impacts of these diseases are extensive.

Furthermore, the Northwest region is a unique area, with a diversity of landscapes with the greatest density of wildlife and wildlife habitats in the U.S., including dense coastal and inland forests, expansive mountain ranges and river valleys, high deserts and productive steppes and plains. Since there are significant regional variations in insect and tick vector ecology, pathogen transmission dynamics and needed resources, it is particularly important that this geographical area be included in nationwide efforts to significantly improve readiness and training in vector-borne diseases.

To highlight these needs, there are no comprehensive data and demographic information, surveillance is limited and training and preparation efforts are scarce and disjointed. We do not fully understand the prevalence and distributions of vector-borne diseases in the Northwest nor do we have a workforce with required expertise to address these concerns.

As you know, the University of Idaho was the lead on a 2016 submission for a Regional Centers of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases. The Idaho proposal included a six-state region, with major universities and health organizations as partners. Unfortunately, there was no award in the Northwest region. Despite that, the University of Idaho's Center for Health in the Human Ecosystem (CHHE) has continued to implement and expand programs designed to address pertinent issues. In 2018, for example, the CHHE introduced a week-long "Biology of Vector-borne Diseases" course with 38 expert instructors and 40 participants from across the U.S. and around the world. The CHHE is planning an expanded version of this annual course from June 24-29, 2019,

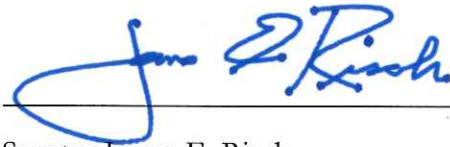
due to a much higher application rate. The course is growing in terms of reach, impact and participants who are looking for leadership in this area.

I hope that we can work together to implement the language in the Congressional report and bring much needed research and resources to Idaho and the Northwest. Thank you very much for your continued engagement and support.

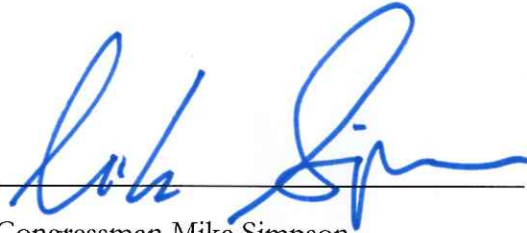
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Crapo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "M".

Senator Mike Crapo

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James E. Risch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "J".

Senator James E. Risch

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Simpson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "M".

Congressman Mike Simpson

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Russ Fulcher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R".

Congressman Russ Fulcher