

Biden's one-time \$700 checks to Hawaii fire victims slammed as a 'slap in the face': President earns even MORE criticism for being out of touch following his Maui stop riddled by uncomfortable moments

By Kelly Laco, Executive Editor Of Politics For Dailymail.Com Updated 09:39 EDT 22 Aug 2023



- **FEMA is giving out the checks to address 'immediate needs' including water, food and clothing**
- **The president was met in Maui with [signs demanding he go home](#), and placards asking why Ukraine was receiving billions while they were in dire need**
- **Biden passed one posted that read: 'Really \$7?'**

[Joe Biden](#) earned more criticism for being 'out of touch' with Americans during his bumpy stop in Maui Monday - including scorn for providing measly \$700 assistance checks.

The [White House](#) announced that each affected household in [Hawaii](#) will receive a \$700 check to address 'immediate needs' including water, food and clothing.

But it's a sum that many islanders consider insulting.

Hawaiian residents and politicians say a paltry \$700 check to each family impacted by devastating wildfires isn't going to cut it.

And some residents even held up signs during Biden's visit Monday comparing assistance to Ukraine and Hawaii.

Biden passed one poster that read: 'Really \$7?' Another resident wrote 'Action Speaks Louder Than Words,' and there were multiple 'No Comment' signs - after the president repeatedly declined to comment on the tragedy last week.

To date Biden has approved \$8.2 million in assistance to 2,700 households in Hawaii. But critics were quick to compare that to the \$12.1 billion in security assistance that has gone to Ukraine so far this year.



People watch as the motorcade carrying President Joe Biden to visit areas devastated by the Maui wildfires passes by. One local gives the president a thumbs down



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The Bidens are seen with Hawaii's governor and his wife in Lahaina on Monday

Former Democratic Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard slammed the \$700 checks as a 'slap in the face.'

'Unfortunately, again, there is a trust deficit because not only have people not shown up, but it was almost a slap in the face of the people there when the big announcement from FEMA was, 'Hey, we are going to give you a one-time payment of \$700.'

'Anybody who has been to Hawaii knows that \$700 does not go very far at a time when so many have lost everything,' she continued.

Ella Sable Tacderan, a victim of the fires, said earlier this week that \$700 is not enough.

'My parents received a check for \$700, which was a slap in the face,' she said.

'Living in Hawaii, everything is so expensive. Groceries can be as much as \$700 just for one grocery run. And it's not enough.'

She added elderly families in Hawaii are basically 'computer illiterate,' which may explain why some people are being 'turned away' on their applications for FEMA assistance.

Another user wrote on Twitter, now known as 'X': 'So out of touch. People in Lahaina lost everything they had including loved ones and he stood there cracking jokes and made it all about him! Still cringing.'

'Remember he paid them a one time payment of \$700, which wouldn't have even covered the cost of fixing Joe's kitchen,' another critic stated.

'If I had lost my home and livelihood, I'd be insulted by Biden sending me a \$700 check.'

The president also sparked outrage while on the island by comparing the Hawaiian blaze that killed at least 114 people to a kitchen fire - and joking about 'hot ground' to a rescuer.

The President's motorcade [was met with screams](#) of 'f*** you' after he finally arrived in Maui - two weeks after the inferno which left 850 people missing and destroyed the historic city of Lahaina.

Biden compounded the anger in a garbled, meandering speech about the deaths of his wife and daughter in 1972, before comparing the horrific blaze to a kitchen fire at his [Delaware](#) home in 2004.

The 80-year-old capped off his disastrous five-hour tour by asking a rescue team whether their boots were reinforced, noting the 'hot ground' under their feet in a tone-deaf attempt at humor.

He also had a [particularly awkward moment](#) with Democratic Hawaii Sen. Brian Schatz when, at the conclusion of a press conference, Schatz

offered him a sip of water.

Biden completely blanked the senator and turned his back on him.

He then began shuffling off, mouth hanging open and gazing listlessly into the crowd, while his wife Jill and Hawaii Governor Josh Green ushered him away from the lectern.

The President [was criticized before his visit](#) for failing to give the wildfires sufficient attention, and accused of a sluggish response to the crisis.

Last weekend, when asked as he left the beach in Delaware for his response to the fires, Biden replied: 'No comment.'

He also appeared to forget the name of Maui, repeatedly referring to fires blazing on 'the Big Island'.

Biden and his wife took a helicopter tour of the affected areas before addressing a gathering of local officials, senators and community officials. Biden did not speak to the media present.



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Biden is seen looking at a burnt vehicle in Lahaina. The X spray painted on the side means it has been searched for human remains

Biden FINALLY surveys devastation in Maui after deadly wildfires





© AP

People watch as the motorcade carrying President Joe Biden to visit areas devastated by the Maui wildfires passes by

Protestors greet Biden with 'fk you' as he arrives in Maui**



The president spoke, as he often does when addressing communities touched by tragedy, of understanding the personal weight of devastating loss and the slow and painful process of recovering.

Biden's first wife, Neilia, and their 1-year-old daughter, Naomi, died in a car accident in 1972. He lost an adult son, Beau, to brain cancer in 2015.

'When things look the most bleak, that's when we need faith,' said Biden, who spent 70 minutes after his remarks speaking with community members.

He told how first responders supported him after Neilia's death, and praised those involved in the Hawaii tragedy.

At another stop, he referenced the 2004 fire at his Wilmington, Delaware home.

'I don't want to compare difficulties but we have a little sense, Jill and I, of what it's like to lose a home,' said Biden.

'Years ago, now 15 years ago, while I was in Washington doing Meet The Press, it was a sunny Sunday and lightning struck at home on a little lake outside our home - not a lake, a pond.'

He said the spark went through the wires and into the heating ducts, and into the kitchen.

'To make a long story short, I almost my wife, my 67 Corvette, and my cat.

'But all kidding aside - I watched the firefighters, the way they responded.'

It is an anecdote that Biden often tells at times of tragedy. Firefighters arrived to heavy smoke but were able to keep the [flames contained to the kitchen](#).

'Luckily, we got it pretty early,' Cranston Heights Fire Company Chief George Lamborn said at the time.

'The fire was under control in 20 minutes.'



Joe and Jill Biden wave on Monday as they board Air Force One to depart Maui



The Bidens left Hawaii to return to Lake Tahoe and resume their vacation

The wildfire that broke out August 8 in the town of Lahaina is now the deadliest in more than a century, and the fifth-deadliest on record for the U.S.

Biden first issued his 'no comment' while while staying at the beach near his Delaware home.

Then while breezing by reporters he made a terse comment, saying he was 'looking at it.'

Back at the White House, a reporter asked Biden at the White House: 'Can you tell us about your Hawaii trip?'

'No, not now,' Biden said, before staff eventually announced details.

The president has appointed Bob Fenton, a regional leader at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, as chief federal response coordinator

for the Maui wildfires, ensuring that someone from his administration will be responsible for long-term recovery efforts.