

During the Bush administration, the Senate confirmed nine judges to the Court of Federal Claims, with the support of every Senate Republican. So far, during the Obama administration, only three Court of Federal Claims nominees have received confirmation votes. That is nine CFC judges during the Bush administration to only three so far in the Obama administration.

It appears that the Senate Republicans' obstruction playbook leaves no court behind. It spans from the very top, with their complete refusal to give a hearing and a vote to Chief Judge Merrick Garland, to the article III circuit and district courts, to the article I Court of Federal Claims, where citizens go to sue their government.

This blockade of all five CFC nominees makes no sense, especially because not a single Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee raised a concern about these nominees either during the committee hearings on these nominations 2 years ago or during the Committee debate 2 years ago or last year.

None of President Bush's nominees to the Court of Federal Claims spent longer than 4 months on the Senate floor before receiving a confirmation vote. Two of them waited only a single day. After 2 years, it is well past time for these five nominees to receive a vote so they can get to work on the shorthanded Court of Federal Claims.

RECOGNIZING THE VERMONT CENTER FOR EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermonters are proud of the innovation and creativity that generate successful businesses in our small State. And for years, Vermont's tech incubator, the Vermont Center for Emerging Technology, VCET, has been providing space for entrepreneurs to take the next steps in driving their startup businesses. As demonstrated in a recent profile of VCET in the New York Times, any objective observer can see Vermont as more than just an outdoor enthusiasts' playground—but also as an oyster community of emerging technologies and innovative thinking in building smart cities and the infrastructure to go with them.

It is no secret that Vermont is full of entrepreneurs eager to take the next steps in their respective fields. From ice cream to craft beverages, digital forensics to game programming, our State is home to many successful business endeavors. The Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies plays a key role in expanding Vermont's tech network while addressing the skilled labor shortage in the State. At its helm is president and fund manager David Bradbury, whose vision for the city of Burlington as an east coast Silicon Valley has driven the nonprofit's development and success.

Housed in a brick building in downtown Burlington, VCET is powered by a

city-owned green energy grid with an enviable fast internet connection. The small but skilled team not only manages the Vermont Seed Capital Fund to administer initial funding for high-opportunity businesses and teams but also provides mentoring and advice to new startups. In collaboration with other Burlington-based companies and nonprofits, including BTV Ignite and Vermont HITECH, VCET encourages technology pioneers to dream big. With the help of local colleges offering courses in high growth fields, students learn the skills needed to thrive in a fast-changing economy. In turn, Vermont employers benefit from a larger pool of skilled technology workers, while employees gain access to better jobs and benefits.

The success of David's vision to grow Burlington into a technology hub while addressing the lack of skilled workers is rooted in something deeper than the rapidly expanding field of technology. Vermont's community and socially focused values bring neighbors together to benefit from shared experiences while providing local, sustainable, and accessible services. Corporate responsibility and attention to green energy reflect Vermont's commitment to lessening our environmental footprint while promoting energy conservation and efficiency. Whether encouraging Vermonters to pursue their passion for technology or forging new paths in the field, VCET is spurring economic development and technology jobs throughout our Green Mountain State.

I ask unanimous consent that a New York Times article from July 20, "A 'Smart' Green Tech Hub in Vermont Reimagines the Status Quo," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From The New York Times, July 20, 2016]

A "SMART" GREEN TECH HUB IN VERMONT
REIMAGINES THE STATUS QUO
(By Constance Gustke)

Inside a plain brick building in Burlington lies the Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies, a buzzing hipster incubator that looks as if it could be in Silicon Valley. It is powered invisibly by forces that any city would envy: a green grid that is highly energy-efficient and a superfast one-gigabit internet connection.

"People would kill for this internet connection," said Tom Torti, president of the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce. "For us to grow our tech network, we needed to double down on fiber network." The new Burlington economy is going to be knowledge- and skills-based, he added.

This digital superhighway runs through beautiful Burlington, a small city sandwiched between the distant Green Mountains and the 125-mile-long Lake Champlain. It is an outlier as far as emerging technology hubs and so-called smart cities go. But Burlington, which has a lower unemployment rate than Silicon Valley, is now spawning a wave of technology pioneers.

The technology center, called VCET, provides free advice, mentoring, seed money and gorgeous co-working spaces that are available to entrepreneurs for a low fee. Students can use these spaces free, so Max Robbins

and Peter Silverman, 20-year-old college students, are starting their business, Beacon VT, there. It is similar to the dating site OkCupid, but for employment, matching students with employers.

"We're trying to give people an unfair advantage," said David Bradbury, president and fund manager at VCET. "There's nothing too big that you can't dream here. And the snowball is moving faster."

An ultrahigh-speed internet backbone even helped Burlington form a partnership with US Ignite, which aims to build the next generation of internet apps, to form BTV Ignite. Its goal is to mindfully build on the city's network and further innovation, said Michael Schirling, who heads BTV Ignite.

"Smart cities and new technologies have the potential to change everything," said Mr. Schirling, a former Burlington police chief. "When you put in the right building blocks, you get a collision of ideas, which can become self-generating. It's attitude and infrastructure."

A result is that Burlington, once a timber port, has a stunningly low unemployment rate of 2.3 percent. On the downside, the city is also experiencing a skilled-labor shortage; hundreds of coding jobs alone languish on job boards. Burlington was named a TechHire city by the White House in 2016 to help link local employers with local workers, and to help these workers get the skills they need for a fast-changing economy. The designation does not come with funding, but it does help Burlington get grants for free training.

The TechHire mandate in Burlington is to train 400 technology workers through 2020.

"We want younger people to know that there are career opportunities here," Mr. Torti said. "We're trying to grow our work force rather than importing it."

A nonprofit organization known as Vermont Hitec is a crucial part of that vision.

It works in partnership with local companies to offer boot camps online and in classrooms that teach skills such as medical coding and programming that lead to good-paying jobs with benefits.

Vermont Information Processing, which develops software for the beverage industry, has been working with Vermont Hitec so that it can retrain or recruit employees as its business grows and it becomes less interested in outsourcing.

Colleges like the University of Vermont, which offers a biotechnology program, and Champlain College are also helping solve the employment puzzle Champlain College offers degrees in high-demand careers like digital forensics and game programming, along with a special program for federal employees who can get online degrees in high-growth fields.

"We're responsive, nimble and entrepreneurial," said Don Laackman, president of Champlain College. "There's a connection between employment needs and sources offered."

Burlington got its first push into technology start-ups when IDX Systems, a health care software maker, was founded there in 1969. It was sold to General Electric about 10 years ago.

"IDX created a lot of wealth and talent, and these people could be angel investors," Mr. Bradbury said. "It was a tipping point."

The next wave of innovation has come from internet companies like MyWebGrocer, which offers digital grocery services, and Dealer.com, which offers digital marketing services for the auto industry. Dealer.com became a legend in Burlington after it was sold for \$1 billion a couple of years ago. Mike Lane, one of Dealer.com's founders and its former chief operations officer, who is now on the VCET board, is an angel investor who has funded eight start-ups. One of his investments is Faraday Inc., which uses data analytics to help companies target customers.

"In the future, there will be several \$50 million to \$100 million exits here," Mr. Lane said, "along with other larger ones mixed in."

He credits Vermont's community and socially conscious spirit with his success. "We didn't buy the philosophy that we had to be in a hot spot," said Mr. Lane, who returned to Vermont after working in Cambridge, Mass. "Even Zuckerberg realized that he could have been anywhere to build Facebook."

That can-do spirit also inspired Marguerite Dibble, 26, who began her firm GameTheory while she was still a student at Champlain College. Its mission is to use gaming to inspire behavior changes, such as teaching teens financial literacy.

"In Burlington, I can call anyone and learn from their experience," said Ms. Dibble, who was born in a small Vermont town with no ZIP code. "The degrees of separation are lessened here. There's a shared Vermontiness."

The energy to power GameTheory's innovation comes from Burlington's green grid, which is owned by the city. The state has long been one of the country's greenest. But in 2014, Burlington upped the ante by turning only to wind, water and biomass to power the city—one of the first cities in the nation to do so. There are also incentives for reducing energy. Landlords, for example, can choose to have free energy audits, and more than 100 have done so.

Other Burlington businesses also work hard to save energy on their own. Seventh Generation, which makes environmentally conscious household products and was founded in Burlington, gives its employees bonuses for helping reduce greenhouse gases. Like many other companies in Burlington, Seventh Generation also aims to be socially responsible and was formed as a B Corp, which means it has to meet social, environmental, accountability and transparency standards.

With this focus on energy efficiency, the city's electricity rates have not risen in eight years, said Neale Lunderville, general manager of the Burlington Electric Department. "And there are no rate increases on the horizon," he said, "since we're not chasing the next kilowatt-hour."

Electric cars even have their own parking spaces with chargers.

Burlington will eventually become a net-zero city, said the mayor, Miro Weinberger. "Our isolation promotes a commitment to pride and place," he said.

The city that helped propel Senator Bernie Sanders also has its own nonprofit urban farm called the Intervale Center. The land was once an abandoned dumping ground with old tires and cars. That space now contains 350 acres with bee hives, commercial farms, greenhouses and other projects. Through its food hub, local foods are delivered to area businesses and individuals.

Intervale's farm incubator, a five-year program, even teaches new farmers the ropes, said Travis Marcotte, executive director of Intervale Center. "They then transition out of the Intervale," he said, "So we're spinning off whole farms."

It is a hopeful message, Mr. Marcotte said.

MAKE THE LAW WORK FOR EVERYONE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, the constituencies in North Carolina are as varied as any in America. I am honored to represent America's largest Army Post—Fort Bragg—as well as 45 percent of the U.S. Marine Corps at Camp

Lejeune and Cherry Point. Because of their presence and our proud military tradition, by 2020, one in every nine North Carolinians will be a veteran. We are also home to outstanding companies that serve our disabled citizens like the Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind. The confluence of these two communities—veterans and services for the disabled—and how each is treated by the Federal Government is of particular concern to me.

For decades, both the general disabled community and the disabled veterans' community have existed in a harmonious balance when it came to securing jobs and competitive contracts with the Federal Government. The Javits Wagner O'Day Act of 1938, the AbilityOne Program, and the Veterans Benefits, Health Insurance, and Information Technology Act of 2006 assist Americans who are blind, citizens with severe disabilities, and our U.S. military veterans through leveraging the procurement power of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. Unfortunately, the recent Kingdomware Technologies, Inc. v. United States Supreme Court ruling reinterpreted these acts to preclude certain disabled groups from bidding for jobs and business with the Department of Veterans Affairs. These are not laws designed to build barriers to stop disabled veterans from bidding for work outside of the Veterans Administration or the blind for bidding for work within the VA, but that is what has happened.

I am asking my colleagues in Congress to take another look at this situation. Level the playing field. These laws should continue their mutual co-existence by maintaining set-aside opportunities that create sustainable employment opportunities for the 70 percent of blind or severely disabled Americans who are seeking jobs, in addition to competitive contract opportunities for veterans who take the initiative to start their own small businesses. Let's get this right.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING MARION COUNTY'S COMMITMENT TO VETERANS

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Marion County, AR, on becoming the first Purple Heart County in Arkansas on November 15, 2015.

Created by George Washington in 1782, the Purple Heart is our Nation's oldest military medal. The Purple Heart is awarded to members of the Armed Forces who are wounded or killed in combat. These men and women are some of the finest heroes that our Nation has to offer.

Last year, Marion County chose to honor the service and sacrifice of our Purple Heart heroes in Arkansas by becoming the first Purple Heart County in Arkansas. Marion County's unwavering support of the heroic actions of

our Purple Heart recipients stands as a reflection of the appreciation and gratitude of its residents.

Marion County recently held a celebration of its designation as Arkansas' first Purple Heart County that brought the community together to honor Purple Heart recipients. Showing our admiration for those who have served and sacrificed so much for our freedom is such a worthy endeavor, and this recognition is well deserved.

On behalf of all Arkansans, I echo the sentiments of the citizens of Marion County in saying how grateful we are for our veterans and their willingness to serve their country. There truly is no greater display of service and sacrifice than that.

I would like to take this opportunity to applaud Marion County for publicly recognizing our veterans and Purple Heart recipients by becoming Arkansas' first Purple Heart County. Arkansas is proud that our local communities are paying respect to our veterans and standing behind them.●

RECOGNIZING CRAWFORD COUNTY ADULT EDUCATION CENTER

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the Crawford County Adult Education Center as it celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

Founded in 1966, the Crawford County Adult Education Center offers ongoing learning opportunities and helps prepare students for career advancement, postsecondary education, technological innovation, and life enrichment. Among many other services, the center offers classes in computer literacy, English as a Second Language, and citizenship, as well as courses that allow adult learners to earn their GED. It also provides students the opportunity to take college-level classes through Vincennes University.

While we strive to give our children the best educational opportunities available, it is important to recognize that some people in our communities are forced to put their educations on hold for various reasons. Adult education programs are an important resource in helping these individuals to better themselves, continue their educational development, seek out tools to help them advance in their careers, or learn new skills.

The Crawford County Adult Education Center lives up to those responsibilities and then some. It has helped many Crawford County residents realize their full potential and pursue their dreams.

It is never too late for anybody to set new goals or invest in themselves through continued education. As many who have benefitted from the services of the adult education center in Crawford County have attested, the excellent staff and volunteers play such a vital role in providing opportunities to citizens in all stages of life. Additionally, the results of the center's high-quality services and programs speak for themselves.