

Not only are solar and wind cleaner, they are also cheaper than a number of the plants that burn fossil fuels.

What we said in our tax reform bill is that there are more than 40 separate breaks in energy, many of them just monuments to yesteryear. We proposed throwing them in the trash can. Out they go, \$40 billion worth over a few years, substituting the \$40 billion for clean energy, clean transportation fuel, and energy efficiency. That is going to be in line with what Senator WHITEHOUSE has said, which is that America can get more green for less green, or fewer taxpayer dollars.

I very much appreciate my colleague coming to the floor today. I want to close with just one point. More than any other factor of my time in public service—I think I have discussed this with both the Presiding Officer and Senator WHITEHOUSE—what I have been interested in finding is what I call principled bipartisanship. Bipartisanship is not about Republicans and Democrats taking each other's dumb ideas. Anybody can do that. Then you can pat yourself on the back and say: Oh, my goodness, we are being bipartisan. What it is all about is finding good ideas.

What Senator WHITEHOUSE has done—and, boy, do the fires in the West right now convey the urgency; in effect, he has tried to take markets, marketplace forces, and fuse them together with the best environmental practices we know of. Both sides ought to find that pretty attractive. Conservatives can say: Senator WHITEHOUSE is talking about using marketplace forces—and he has attracted some pretty prominent Republicans to his ideas, as well—and Democrats can say: We are not going to dawdle in terms of trying to improve the environment, and we are not going to turn back the clock on environmental practices.

I very much appreciate Senator WHITEHOUSE's leadership. I am going to have to run off to another meeting. I will just say that I appreciate his including me.

I say to my colleagues: It might not be that wildfires are happening in your State this morning, but climate change affects every single American in one way or another, and we have to find a way to create a bipartisan path to address this growing harm.

With thanks to Senator WHITEHOUSE, I yield the floor.

WILDFIRES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, it is terrific to be joined here today by my colleague from Oregon, Senator WYDEN, to address some of the devastating effects of a changing global climate from the shores of Rhode Island and our beautiful Narragansett Bay to the forests of southern Oregon.

Rhode Island is looking at losing significant territory to storms and sea level rise. Oregon is seeing ancient forests go up in smoke. For most of the

country, this summer has been a scorcher. July was nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit above average, and, before that, the contiguous United States experienced its hottest May and third hottest June on record.

It is oceans too. Just last week, the Rhode Island organization Save the Bay recorded ocean surface temperatures in Little Narragansett Bay, off the coast of Westerly, RI, at nearly 80 degrees Fahrenheit—the highest in over a decade of data and, perhaps, the highest ever in Rhode Island's history.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration recently released its report “State of the Climate in 2017.” The 500 scientists from 65 countries who contributed to this peer-reviewed report, which was published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, reported ominous records broken: the concentration of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, a new high; heat in the upper ocean, a new high; sea level rise, a new high; sea ice coverage in the Arctic and in Antarctica, both new all-time lows and all headed in the wrong direction.

Out West, the NOAA report called out 2017 as an extreme western wildfire season that burned over 4 million hectares. The total costs of \$18 billion tripled the previous U.S. annual wildfire cost record set in 1991.

Right now, in the summer of 2018, blazing temperatures and drought conditions have contributed to wildfire outbreaks worldwide in the U.S., Canada, Australia, South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. The raging Mendocino Complex fire recently became the largest wildfire in the history of the State of California, the previous record being last year's Thomas fire.

Mr. President, I again want to thank the distinguished ranking member on the Finance Committee, and I salute his years of passion on environmental issues and in the defense of his State, which is now suffering so many fires.

We actually have an answer to the question that Senator WYDEN proposed rather rhetorically—why this is happening out in the Mendocino fires, for instance. The assistant deputy director of Cal Fire, Daniel Berlant, who is at the state department of forestry and fire protection, has said this: “Let's be clear: It's our changing climate that is leading to more severe and destructive fires.”

Climate change has doubled the area consumed by forest fires since 1984. According to a report by Climate Central, “[c]ompared to the 1970s, the annual average western U.S. wildfire season is now 105 days longer, has three times as many large fires (larger than 1,000 acres) and sees more than six times as many acres burned.”

Not only are these fires becoming larger, they are becoming more dangerous. They burn hotter and more intensely. They spread more rapidly and shift unpredictably, putting firefighters at risk.

A 2015 study in The Solutions Journal found that, as compared to 1990,

fires are now larger, three times as many homes are burning, and around twice as many brave firefighters are losing their lives.

The Federal Government's “Climate Science Special Report,” released late last year, warned that years without large fires in the western United States will become what they called “extremely rare.” Years without these large fires will become “extremely rare.”

The Environmental Protection Agency warns that unless we curb our greenhouse gas emissions, “climate change is projected to dramatically increase the area burned by wildfires across most of the contiguous U.S.” The Agency estimates for the western United States a more than 40-percent increase in the area burned by wildfires by 2100, and the amount of land in the Southwest burned each year by fires, including Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, could go up by as much as 140 percent.

These more frequent and more ferocious wildfires are leaving permanent scars on America's landscape. Ordinarily, wildfires are part of the natural lifecycle of a healthy forest, but, as Senator WYDEN said, these are not our grandfather's wildfires. The intensity, frequency, and scale of the infernos we are now seeing reflect nature out of whack. Instead of clearing dead trees and groundcover to make room for healthy trees and rebirth of plant life, these superstrong wildfires are simply destroying these ecosystems.

The National Wildlife Federation's 2017 report, ominously titled “Megafires,” says: “If hot enough, extreme fires can even sterilize the soil by killing subsurface seed banks that normally aid in post-fire recovery.” Some native environments are permanently lost to charred landscapes and invasive species.

A 2017 study reported in the journal Science found that “thanks to climate change, areas ravaged by wildfires may never recover, wiping out entire ecological communities forever.” This review of areas ravaged by wildfires showed that “the proportion of sites with no regrowth almost doubled after 2000” as compared to the 1980s or 1990s.

Of course, the consequences of these fires to human life are dire. Fourteen people died in last year's wildfires in California, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Utah.

The risk doesn't end with the flames. After last year's devastating fire in California, when rain finally returned to the area, but without trees and other plants to hold the soil in place, the downpours unleashed torrents of mud, rocks, and debris, killing more than 20 people. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that 25 to 30 people die each year in postfire floods and mudslides.

As Senator WYDEN mentioned, air pollution is another consequence of these wildfires, and it can spread far

beyond the burned-out site of the fire. Hundreds of miles downwind, air can become unhealthy and even hazardous.

I remember visiting Saskatchewan with Senator GRAHAM and seeing skies there clouded from Oregon's fires. Last month, air in the northwest took the title of "worst in the nation"—not what they were looking for—with officials recommending that residents wear masks when venturing outdoors. Children, pregnant women, and people with breathing difficulties were told to actually leave town, to leave the area.

Wildfires unleash an especially harmful air pollutant: tiny particles less than 2.5 microns in diameter. For comparison, an average human hair is around 70 microns wide. So we are talking about very small particles circulating in the air. Because they are so small, they are easily inhaled and can lodge deep in the lungs and even enter the human bloodstream. Exposure to them has been associated with asthma, heart attack, stroke, and some cancers. Emerging research even links this nasty pollutant to premature births.

A researcher at NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder, CO, told *Science* magazine that wildfire smoke is "one of the largest problems facing air quality and climate issues going forward." According to a 2016 study in the journal *Climatic Change*, wildfires were to blame for more than two-thirds of the bad-air days in the western U.S., with unhealthy levels of particulate matter.

Smoke and pollution from western wildfires get picked up by the jet stream and can be carried 3,000 miles across the United States, all the way to our east coast, contaminating air throughout the country with noxious particulate matter, methanol, benzene, ozone, and other toxins.

This image shows the plume of smoke from west coast fires over here spilling across the country last September. NASA reports that when airborne contaminants are drawn down to ground level, as happened in Iowa last summer, wildfires can trigger air quality warnings hundreds, even thousands, of miles away.

The scourge of these wildfires in Senator WYDEN's home State and throughout the West is one of the most dangerous symptoms of carbon pollution and climate change. His Oregon constituents see this devastation firsthand. Senator WYDEN has helped to rush additional resources to Federal firefighting agencies to step up the response to these exploding wildfires. I thank him for joining me here today as we implore our colleagues to recognize what is going on.

If you don't believe me, simply go to your own home State universities and ask them. Whether it is Alaska's, Texas's, Oklahoma's, Rhode Island's, or Oregon's universities, they will tell you. This is stuff that is so clear that it is taught in your home State universities. Yet here in the Senate, we continue to indulge the pretense that we

don't know what is going on. Well, it is climate change, plain and simple, as we careen toward what could be an irreversible shift in our climate, changing our Earth into what one recent report called a "hothouse." Yet here we are, the great Congress of the United States, stuck in dirty fossil fuel politics, fiddling under the Capitol dome while the western United States burns.

I thank my distinguished friend from the great State of Oregon for joining me here today.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of A. Marvin Quattlebaum, Jr., of South Carolina, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip is recognized.

REPUBLICAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today we will confirm two more appellate judges, bringing our total to 26 since the Trump administration began. This has been one of the hallmarks of the President and of our agenda, and it is critically important. So I thank the President, as well as all of our colleagues who have worked so hard to fill these vacancies on our Nation's courts.

There have been many accomplishments this last year and a half, but perhaps the greatest has been the new, energized state of our economy. This is a direct, tangible impact on the quality of life of all Americans. The Declaration of Independence designates, among the unalienable rights, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I like to think that by getting our foot off the neck of the economy, by repealing unnecessary overregulation, and by cutting taxes and letting people keep more of what they earn, we are pursuing those unalienable rights on behalf of the American people—certainly the pursuit of happiness.

The Labor Department reported earlier this month that unemployment had fallen to 3.9 percent in July, which is close to the 18-year low that was achieved in May of this year. One of the highlights of the jobs report was that high school dropouts and others who struggled during the Obama-era recession are doing significantly better. Their unemployment rate fell to 5.1 percent, the lowest since the government started collecting data on

those without a high school diploma. Of course, this is pointed out particularly at a time when labor is in short supply; that is, there are a lot of good-paying jobs for which there are not trained workers who could qualify for those jobs. I think it makes it incumbent on us, at all levels of government—Federal, State, and local—to do more to help train workers so they qualify for these good, well-paying jobs that right now are going unfilled because of a shortage of trained workers. That is one of the imperatives, I believe, of a tight job market caused by a booming economy.

The July report showed that the economy grew by 4.1 percent in the second quarter. That is an incredible number. The economy is literally on fire, and that is a good thing for the American people. All of this positive economic news is complemented by the tax reform package I mentioned a moment ago that we passed last December, which has become perhaps the biggest game changer of all, opening doors and offering new opportunities for American workers.

In order to make the rates of taxation in America competitive globally, we lowered the corporate rate from 35 to 21 percent. This is something that Democrats, like President Obama, as well as Republicans, have supported in the past, recognizing that we were chasing investment overseas and any earnings on investments overseas were not coming back to the United States to be invested here in workers and infrastructure. This was a self-inflicted wound that we have now cured. We also were successful in helping working families by doubling the child tax credit.

One of the tangible benefits of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is that more than 700 companies have used the tax savings to benefit their employees as well as their customers. They have announced pay raises and 401(k) retirement match increases. Utility bills have been cut for seniors and those on fixed incomes, because when investor-owned utilities got their tax rates lowered, they had to lower rates that they charge on utility bills.

This legislation has resulted in bonuses and other benefits for American workers, perhaps too numerous to mention, but it is worth mentioning because, unfortunately, in the fog that represents the news coverage that comes out of Washington, DC, sometimes these tangible benefits are overlooked. It is important for us to demonstrate that we are keeping faith with the American people—the people who sent us here—and we are doing the work of governing in a way that directly and tangibly benefits each of them—something, again, that gets lost in the fog that emanates here in Washington.

But it is not just the economy that deserves mentioning. The judiciary is the third and coequal branch of government. I believe the confirmation of