

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