



OREGON'S SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

The Wildfire Smoke Emergency Declaration Act

The increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires has become a serious public health issue across the United States. Wildfire smoke—not only from Oregon’s fires, but also drifting into the state from as far away as Canada or southern California—has become a hazard each summer. In the past two years, the air quality has been bad enough to cancel school events, prevent people from leaving their homes, and increase hospitalizations. Small businesses have even reported losses as the dense smoke enters their buildings and permeates their products.

Summer smoke can stretch from one end of the state to the other, posing a major challenge for many communities and businesses. Even without fires nearby, smoke can drift from afar. Much like in the cases of tornados or floods, federal assistance is necessary to help communities protect their health and provide relief to businesses that lose revenue from smoke. According to Travel Oregon, businesses in Oregon lost an estimated \$51.1 million in revenue during 2017 alone due to wildfire smoke. Losses ranged from smoke-tainted grapes to furniture ruined by absorbing the smoke odor.

The Wildfire Smoke Emergency Declaration Act would allow the President to declare a “smoke emergency” when wildfire smoke creates hazardous air quality conditions. This declaration would authorize federal agencies to provide emergency assistance to states and local communities to establish smoke shelters, assist with relocation efforts, and install emergency smoke monitors. The bill would also authorize the Small Business Administration to provide relief to businesses affected by wildfire smoke to help cover lost revenue.