



OREGON'S SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

The Smoke-Ready Communities 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.

While the Environmental Protection Agency recommends staying indoors to avoid the worst health impacts of wildfire smoke, making the necessary upgrades to homes and buildings can be costly. Portable air cleaners can cost up to \$900, and integrated central air filtration systems can cost anywhere from \$250 to \$3,000. In addition, running a portable air cleaner can raise a household’s electricity bill by \$100 to \$250 per year. For many families and communities, this simply isn’t feasible.

The Smoke-Ready Communities Act would make these necessary air quality upgrades more accessible by providing federal funding to help local communities invest in building local resilience to wildfire smoke by:

- Creating a grant program within the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide flexible funding for communities to improve public buildings, like schools, to enhance their resilience to smoke.
- Creating a grant program through the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide grant funding to help vulnerable Oregonians smoke-proof their homes and provide assistance with the associated energy costs, similar to existing programs like the Low-Income Home Energy Program or the Weatherization Assistance Program.
- Creating a grant program within the Small Business Administration to help small businesses invest in technologies to protect their customers and employees from the impact of smoke.