

115TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To authorize transitional sheltering assistance for individuals who live in areas with unhealthy air quality caused by wildfires, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

**Mr. Wyden** \_\_\_\_\_ introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

**A BILL**

To authorize transitional sheltering assistance for individuals who live in areas with unhealthy air quality caused by wildfires, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Clean Air Refugee As-  
5 sistance Act of 2018”.

6 **SEC. 2. ASSISTANCE.**

7 In carrying out the Transitional Sheltering Assist-  
8 ance Program of the Federal Emergency Management  
9 Agency under section 403 of Robert T. Stafford Disaster  
10 Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170b),

1 the President may provide transitional shelter assistance  
2 to individuals living in an area where the air quality index  
3 is determined to be unhealthy for not less than 3 consecu-  
4 tive days as a result of a wildfire declared by the President  
5 to be a major disaster under section 401 of such Act (42  
6 U.S.C. 5170) or declared to be a major disaster by the  
7 Governor of the State in which the individuals are located.

## CLEAN AIR REFUGEES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Clean Air Refugee Assistance Act of 2018 to help Americans who have been driven away from their homes by choking, hazardous wildfire smoke. Western wildfires are getting bigger, hotter, and more difficult to fight and scientists says it's only likely to get worse.

Folks back home in Oregon and across the Pacific Northwest already know what I'm talking about because they're on the front lines of these disasters. With dryer summers and lower snow packs, wildfires rage across the west. They're threatening lives, homes, and businesses and generating so much smoke that they're creating what I call clean air refugees.

These are people who can't go outside and, in some cases, who must flee their homes and communities to find pockets of fresh air.

I'm talking about children suffering from asthma and other conditions and seniors who need a respirator to breathe.

In some cases, Oregonians lacking access to safe, clean air are being told to seek shelter in public places like libraries and government buildings.

My legislation would help provide some relief by opening the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Transitional Sheltering Assistance program to people seeking temporary shelter from wildfire smoke.

This program already permits FEMA to pay for temporary lodging for people who can't immediately return home following a disaster.

My bill would permit clean air refugees to apply if they live in an area where the air quality index is determined to be unhealthy for at least three consecutive days as the result of a wildfire declared to be a major disaster by the President or Governor of the affected state.

FEMA-approved applicants would pick from a list of participating hotels and motels and FEMA would pay the lodging costs.

Mr. President, the federal government needs to step up and be a better partner on these wildfires and it can start by helping Americans who have been driven from their homes find some refuge.

Passing the Clean Air Refugee Assistance Act would be a breath of fresh air for folks struggling to escape the choking smoke, and I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.