

WASHINGTON, DC - The House Committee on Energy and Commerce approved an amendment Thursday offered by Reps. Peter Welch and Jay Inslee that would prioritize existing efficiency and renewable energy programs in the economic stimulus bill.

The amendment to the American Recovery and Reinvestment bill would encourage states to direct \$3.4 billion in new State Energy Program funding toward the expansion of programs already engaged in energy efficiency projects and renewable energy development.

"As we work to bring our economy back to life, we must create new, green jobs in Vermont by investing in efficiency and renewable energy programs," Welch said. "Increasing funds available to effective public and private efforts is the most direct and immediate way to create jobs and combat climate change."

The Welch/Inslee amendment would benefit Vermonters by encouraging states to support programs like the nonprofit, state-funded Efficiency Vermont, which assists Vermont households and businesses in reducing their energy costs.

Efficiency Vermont director Blair Hamilton said Thursday, "Representatives Welch and Inslee have added valuable focus to the bill with their amendment. They recognize that jobs and energy savings can be delivered sooner and with greater impact if economic stimulus builds on the foundation of successful existing state-level energy efficiency and renewable energy programs."

The Energy and Commerce committee expects to complete its review of the American Recovery and Reinvestment bill late Thursday. The House is expected to vote on the full bill next Wednesday.