

At the invitation of Rep. Peter Welch, Regulatory Assistance Project Director Richard Cowart will testify Thursday before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

The East Calais resident will be taking part in the first week of hearings on the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, a major climate change bill which includes legislation authored by Welch aiming to increase energy efficiency by 20 percent.

Cowart, a former commissioner and chairman of the Vermont Public Service Board, will emphasize the critical role energy efficiency can play in addressing climate change while contributing to cost containment for consumers.

"The world needs us to get control of our greenhouse emissions, but people are worried about the costs of climate legislation. I'm delivering good news: we can design a carbon cap-and-trade program to support and reward energy efficiency, which is the low cost 'carbon scrubber' we need today," Cowart said.

Welch's Retrofit for Energy and Environmental Performance (REEP) Program would provide resources to homeowners and small business owners to retrofit millions of existing buildings - an effort that would create jobs, save money on energy costs and contribute to combating climate change. Welch introduced the REEP Act in March; the legislation was subsequently incorporated into the American Clean Energy and Security Act.

"Vermont's leadership in achieving savings through energy efficiency will be a resource for the country as it begins to take on significant climate change legislation," Welch said. "I am pleased Richard Cowart will bring his knowledge and expertise to this important debate."