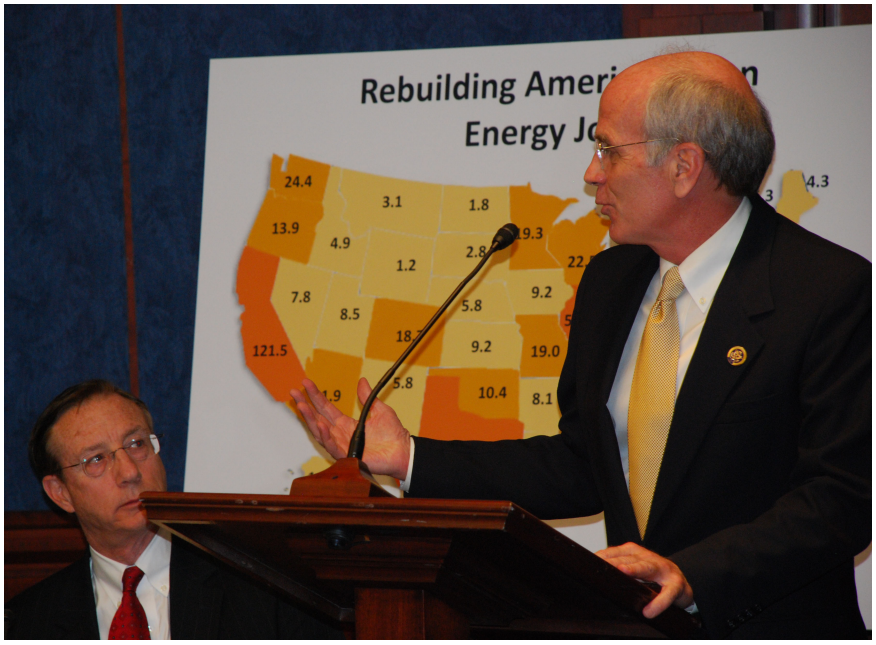
Welch joins Sens. Brown and Merkley to launch "Rebuilding America"



Rep. Peter Welch on Wednesday urged President Obama to use existing authority and already appropriated recovery funds to create a national home retrofit program. The initiative would seek to make five million homes more energy efficient – creating more than 600,000 jobs and saving homeowners $3 billion a year in energy bills.

In a letter written by Welch and signed by 44 other Members of Congress, Welch called on the President to take immediate action to create jobs by investing in energy efficiency retrofits. The initiative is based the Welch-authored Retrofit for Energy and Environmental Performance Program (H.R. 1778), which was incorporated into the Waxman-Markey energy bill (H.R. 2454) and passed by the House this summer.

"By investing in energy efficiency, we can create jobs that cannot be exported and provide a much-needed boost to our economy," said Rep. Peter Welch, a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. "Vermont's groundbreaking efficiency programs have proven that retrofits make sense – that they save consumers money, reduce carbon pollution and create jobs. Now it's time for the nation to follow Vermont's lead and invest in the potential of energy efficiency."

Welch released the letter Wednesday afternoon at the launch of Rebuilding America, a new coalition of labor, manufacturing, consumer and environmental organizations. The group is seeking a long-term investment in energy efficiency and hopes to retrofit 50 million buildings by 2020.

Welch was joined at the Rebuilding America launch by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR), along with representatives of many of the 50 businesses, manufacturers, labor unions and trade associations that have endorsed the effort.

Welch's letter to President Obama, copied below, was signed by Reps. Tammy Baldwin, Earl Blumenauer, Bruce Braley, Lois Capps, Russ Carnahan, Donna Christensen, Judy Chu, Gerry Connolly, John Conyers, Joe Courtney, William Delahunt, Lloyd Doggett, Bill Foster, Bart Gordon, Debbie Halvorson, Alcee Hastings, Jim Himes, Paul Hodes, Rush Holt, Jay Inslee, Mary Jo Kilroy, Hank Johnson, Carolyn Kilpatrick, Ron Kind, Jim Langevin, Barbara Lee, Dave Loebsack, Daniel Maffei, Betsy Markey, Mike Michaud, Patrick Murphy, John Olver, Frank Pallone, Jared Polis, David Price, Ciro Rodriguez, Tim Ryan, Linda Sánchez, Joe Sestak, Health Shuler, Paul Tonko, Niki Tsongas, Chris Van Hollen, Robert Wexler

November 18, 2009

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Vice President,

We share your urgent goal of quickly putting Americans back to work. As you review options to achieve this goal, we urge you to consider a national energy efficiency home retrofit program, modeled after House-passed legislation, which would immediately create jobs and save homeowners money on their energy bills.

We believe a retrofit jobs program could:

- create 600,000 to 850,000 local jobs that cannot be outsourced;
- retrofit over 5 million homes; and
- save homeowners more than $3 billion per year on energy bills.

We urge you to review H.R. 1778, the Retrofit for Energy and Environmental Performance (REEP) Program, which is included in the House and Senate climate change bills (Sections 202 and 164, respectively). This legislation has the support of a broad coalition of industry, trade, conservation, and labor groups, including the National Association of Home Builders, Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Association of Realtors, EfficiencyFirst, and The Alliance to Save Energy, among others.

Consistent with the Vice President's October 19 "Recovery Through Retrofit Report," we believe a jobs retrofit program of this nature could be implemented immediately using authority under current law and funds already appropriated by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

We look forward to working with you on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress