

NeighborWorks of Western Vermont won a \$4.5 million grant for innovative energy efficiency and renewable energy programs, the Vermont congressional delegation announced today.

The Rutland County nonprofit housing lender was awarded the grant – one of only 20 nationwide – for its proposal to save energy and create jobs retrofitting homes and municipal buildings.

The award comes through a nationwide energy efficiency block grant program created in legislation authored by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) played critical roles securing the grant funded by the economic stimulus bill that Congress passed last year.

"This is exactly why I helped write the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, to help communities invest in energy efficiency in homes and businesses and public buildings," said Sanders, chairman of the Senate's green jobs subcommittee. "Today's announcement of nearly \$4.5 million for Rutland County will help make thousands of homes and buildings more energy efficient, reduce energy bills, save money, cut greenhouse gas emissions and create jobs."

"This project with multiple benefits is exactly the kind of project we had in mind for the economic recovery plan. This collaborative, community-based effort puts people back to work while advancing a new green economy," said Leahy, a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee that led in writing the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. "NeighborWorks of Western Vermont has designed an innovative project that will have a real impact in energy conservation and clean energy generation."

"This grant is a recognition of NeighborWorks' innovation, creativity and dedication to helping Rutland County families save energy and save money. This organization has worked hard to marshal the resources of the Rutland community, partnering with public and private entities to design a program that works for this region," said Welch, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "With this significant federal investment, NeighborWorks will be able to achieve its goal of creating quality jobs and saving families money."

The grant was awarded by U.S. Department of Energy under the block grant program Sanders created in the 2007 energy bill. The initial \$3.2 billion in funding for the nationwide program was appropriated in the economic stimulus bill. It set aside \$454 million for the competitive grants.

"Working with our partners we will be able to retrofit 40 percent of the homes in Rutland County for energy savings, create an estimated 352 jobs, and show the entire country what a single county in Vermont can do with resources and the determination to get it done, " said Ludy Biddle, executive director of NeighborWorks.

Over the three-year grant period, the West Rutland nonprofit plans to serve up to 40 percent of eligible households in the county – 7,300 customers altogether – with home visits on ways to lower energy costs. It will conduct at least 2,000 comprehensive energy audits and help 1,000 residents complete substantial retrofits. The total energy savings projected to be achieved over the first six years alone will total about \$8.7 million.

Key partners in the project include Central Vermont Public Service, Efficiency Vermont, five local banks, Green Mountain College, the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, local retailers, local governments, and community volunteers.