

[By Nancy Remsen](#)

After taking the oath of office last week, Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., is touring Vermont this week to announce some of the initiatives he will pursue as a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. This committee handles an array of issues including energy, health care, and telecommunication policy.

Welch said he will try to break the gridlock that prevails in Congress “by pursuing practical policies that have the potential for bipartisan support.”

Monday Welch offered his energy efficiency ideas.

Today he will highlight “a practical approach to saving money in the Medicare system while improving the health of beneficiaries at a 10 a.m. news conference at Montpelier Integrative Family Health. Later in the week he will focus on telecommunication proposals.

Speaking at the future site of the Green Mountain Power Innovation Center on Monday, Welch listed three energy efficiency initiatives he will pursue. Here are summaries provided by his office:

- Helping homeowners invest in energy efficiency: Welch will introduce legislation to provide a rebate of up to \$8000 to homeowners who retrofit their homes to make them more energy efficient. The rebates will be scaled to provide greater savings for those who save more energy. A similar Welch-authored bill was passed by the House in 2010 with bipartisan support. Welch is working on the legislation with Rep. David McKinley, R-W.V.
- Making commercial buildings more efficient: With buildings consuming more than 40 percent of energy in the U.S., Welch is working with a bipartisan group to advance legislation to increase a tax deduction that encourages commercial building owners to reduce energy consumption. The bill will make the deduction performance based to reward those who achieve higher energy savings.
- Pushing the federal government to become more energy efficient: Welch is working with a bipartisan group of lawmakers to increase the use of Energy Saving Performance Contract (ESPCs), which allow the federal government to partner with the private sector to undertake

energy efficiency upgrades that will save energy at no cost to the taxpayer.

In early December, Welch partnered with Rep. Cory Gardner, R-CO, to launch a 10-member, bipartisan caucus that will push for performance contracting in government buildings across the country and thereby provide guaranteed energy savings to American taxpayers.

“The goal of our caucus is going to be pushing for policies that reduce energy costs, cut pollution, and create jobs,” Gardner and Welch said in a joint statement. “There is nearly 3 billion square feet of building space that is owned and operated by the federal government, and by making government buildings more energy efficient we can save taxpayer dollars and give a boost the construction and energy sectors of our economy.”