

*More than 50 members join Welch's call for energy and cost savings*

Rep. Peter Welch on Tuesday led an effort calling on the nation's largest energy consumer – the federal government – to reduce its energy use and save taxpayer dollars.

In a letter to Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Welch urged the Department of Energy to implement President Obama's pledge to save taxpayers \$2 billion a year by making 75 percent of federal buildings more energy efficient. American taxpayers spend \$4 billion annually to heat, cool and power roughly 500,000 federal buildings and facilities.

Welch's letter – signed by 56 Members of Congress – called for agencies to take advantage of Energy Savings Performance Contracts (ESPCs), which allow them to make efficiency improvements without upfront capital costs.

"This is a common sense strategy to save energy and save taxpayer dollars. Without spending a dime, the federal government can save \$2 billion a year and take the lead in promoting energy efficiency," Welch said.

ESPCs allow federal agencies to contract with energy service companies to conduct energy audits and design and construct energy-saving improvements. The contractor guarantees that efficiency improvements will generate cost savings sufficient to pay for the projects.

The New York Times reported last month that the Department of Energy itself could save more than \$11.5 million of the \$300 million it spends annually on utilities simply by making better use of thermostat controls it has already purchased. The energy saved could power 9,800 homes every year. Throughout the federal government, similar inefficiencies are costing taxpayers millions of dollars.

This spring Welch authored legislation, which was incorporated into the House-passed energy bill, to create a national building retrofit program for homeowners and businesses. When he

took office in 2007, Welch made his the first carbon neutral Congressional office, inspiring an initiative by Speaker Nancy Pelosi to green the Capitol and House office buildings.

Welch's letter to Secretary Chu is copied below:

September 15, 2009

The Honorable Steven Chu  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu:

In his very first Saturday morning radio address, President Obama stated, "We'll save taxpayers \$2 billion a year by making 75 percent of federal buildings more energy efficient." We strongly support the President's commitment to making our federal buildings more efficient— saving both energy and taxpayer money. We also applaud your leadership of this effort and look forward to working with you to achieve this important goal.

We commend the Department of Energy for the recent announcement that it is undertaking "enhancements to the Department's use of Energy Savings Performance Contracts (ESPCs) to accelerate energy savings and carbon reduction at DOE facilities." We are particularly pleased that the Department has highlighted the important role of the ESPC program. ESPCs have proven to be a highly successful tool to encourage energy efficiency in federal buildings, and the ESPC program will be essential to achieving the President's goal.

In support of the Administration's energy efficiency objective, we strongly urge you to take full advantage of the energy efficiency improvement provisions that Congress included in Section 432 of the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) P.L. 110-1409. This section calls for each agency to conduct comprehensive energy audits on facilities that comprise 75 percent of the agency's energy consumption. The provision also authorized the creation of a web-based tracking system to enable the federal government to better understand energy saving opportunities.

Section 432 of EISA 2007 is consistent with and supportive of the Administration's overall energy efficiency plans and will enhance our opportunity for successfully improving federal building efficiency. It provides a highly flexible approach to funding efficiency projects by permitting the use of appropriated funds or private sector financing through ESPCs or Utility Energy Savings Contracts, and explicitly permits any combination of these funding tools on a single project. Overall, Section 432 provides an important framework for ensuring clear, measurable objectives, project transparency and standardized, enforceable provisions for ensuring savings on all federal energy efficiency projects, regardless of how a project is funded.

We want to reiterate our strong support of the President's commitment to improve the energy efficiency of federal buildings. It is because of our shared commitment and support of this goal that we respectfully urge implementation of EISA Section 432, which will be critically essential to our ultimate success in this important effort, and request a report on your plans to implement this important initiative by October 15. Thank you for your consideration and leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

PETER WELCH

Member of Congress

Welch's letter was signed by the following Members of Congress: Steve Israel, Jay Inslee, Jared Polis, Tammy Baldwin, Paul Tonko, Russ Carnahan, Paul Hodes, Jim Langevin, Maurice Hinchey, Lloyd Doggett, Ron Kind, Carol Shea-Porter, Donna Christensen, Joe Sestak, Keith Ellison, John Hall, Barbara Lee, Chris Van Hollen, Gerry Connolly, Hank Johnson, Mike Quigley, Bruce Braley, Jim Moran, Bill Delahunt, Lois Capps, Heath Shuler, Michael Honda, Rosa DeLauro, John Conyers, Robert Wexler, Dina Titus, Mazie Hirono, Joe Courtney, Jim McGovern, Earl Blumenauer, Allyson Schwartz, Steve Cohen, Tim Ryan, Steve Rothman, Sheila Jackson-Lee, John Olver, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Ed Markey, Martin Heinrich, Rush Holt, Niki Tsongas and Donna Edwards.