

House sends economic recovery measures to President Obama for signature

Rep. Peter Welch on Thursday voted to provide an additional 14 weeks of unemployment benefits to those hit hardest by the recession and to extend the popular First-Time Homebuyer Tax Credit until the end of April.

The Emergency Unemployment Compensation Extension Act (H.R. 3548) incorporates two provisions for which Welch has advocated in recent months. At the Essex home of Lindsey and Matt Wignall this October, Welch announced his support for legislation that would extend the First-time Homebuyer tax credit, which provides an \$8,000 tax credit to qualifying families. Later that month, Welch sponsored legislation to extend unemployment benefits to nearly every state – not just the 27 states covered in a previously-passed House bill.

The Senate approved H.R. 3548 yesterday and, with today's 403 to 12 vote in the House, it now goes to President Obama's desk for signature.

"Today Congress took action to support hundreds of Vermonters hit hardest by this recession. At the same time, we invested in economic recovery by helping middle class families achieve the dream of home ownership," Welch said. "Together, these measures will help families get by and help our economy thrive once again."

H.R. 3548 provides 14 additional weeks of unemployment benefits to jobless workers nationwide, with an additional six weeks going to those living in states with unemployment rates above 8.5 percent. According to Moody's Economy.com chief economist Mark Zandi, every \$1 spent on unemployment benefits generates \$1.63 in new economic demand.

The bill extends the First-Time Homebuyer Tax Credit, which was set to expire Nov. 30, to those with a binding contract before April 30, 2010. It also expands the program to those with individual incomes less than \$125,000 or joint incomes of \$225,000 or less. Previously the bill applied to those with individual incomes less than \$75,000 and joint incomes less than \$150,000.

The bill is fully paid for by delaying for seven years a tax break on foreign interest payments. It will not add to the deficit.