

Washington, DC - Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT) supported and the U.S. House passed an economic stimulus package that will boost funding for state and community needs, including funding infrastructure improvements, extending unemployment benefits, and increasing the Medicaid reimbursement rate to the states.

"This targeted economic stimulus will create jobs and provides federal support for those Vermonters and Americans most in need and for our communities' most urgent challenges," said Welch. "In addition to successfully boosting heating assistance for this winter, this economic stimulus focuses resources where the community need is greatest."

The stimulus includes a \$55 million increase in aid to Vermont in Medicaid reimbursement and a \$5 million increase in food assistance to Vermonters most in need. In addition, more than 1,700 Vermonters on unemployment would have their benefits extended.

The economic stimulus package, H.R. 7110, includes funding for:

- **Highway Infrastructure:** \$12.8 billion for our nation's aging highways and bridges to improve safety and reduce traffic congestion.
- **Transportation:** \$3.6 billion to purchase buses and equipment needed to expand public transportation and to make improvements to facilities and \$1 billion to meet growing demand for public transportation due to higher gas prices.
- **Extension of Unemployment Benefits:** Provides an additional 7 weeks of extended benefits for workers who have exhausted regular unemployment compensation (20 total weeks). Extending unemployment benefits is one of the quickest, most cost-effective forms of economic stimulus because workers who have lost their paychecks spend benefits quickly.
- **Medicaid Assistance:** Provides a temporary increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for Medicaid health costs, with increases from one to four percent, at a time of increasing enrollment. These funds will prevent cuts to health insurance and health care services for low-income children and families, as well as generate business activities, jobs, wages and state sales tax revenues that states would otherwise not see.
- **Food Assistance:** \$2.6 billion to address rising food costs for seniors, people with disabilities and very poor families with children. This year, an average of 27.8 million individuals, and 12.5 million households, received food stamps.

Congress passed the first economic stimulus in February 2008.