

During a visit to a drafty, 19th century building in downtown Barre, Rep. Peter Welch on Tuesday unveiled new legislation to improve the energy efficiency of commercial buildings and apartments.

Welch's proposed Building Star legislation (H.R. 5476) would provide rebates and low-interest loans to business owners and apartment building owners who install energy saving materials and products. The program would create 150,000 jobs by spurring private investment in commercial energy retrofits. It would save business owners \$3 billion annually on their energy bills.

"Building Star will put people to work across the country, taking on our nation's energy problem directly. At the same time, it will provide crucial support to owners of small businesses and apartment buildings, helping them cut their energy bills," Welch said. "Building Star will create quality jobs, support small businesses and cut harmful carbon emissions."

Outside of Nelson Ace Hardware Tuesday morning, Welch outlined the benefits of Building Star alongside Barre business owner Bob Nelson, who also owns several low- and moderate-income apartments above the store. The two accompanied Efficiency Vermont senior project manager Walter Scott as he conducted an energy audit of the building to determine how Nelson could reduce energy costs.

"Linda and I are excited about the Building Star program," Nelson said. "It will help us retrofit our 110-year-old building, making it more energy efficient, keeping heating costs down and ensuring that rent is affordable."

Building Star is the commercial equivalent of the Home Star Energy Retrofit Act, a Welch-authored bill that passed the House in May. Like Home Star, Building Star provides direct incentives to owners, encouraging them to invest their own capital in the energy retrofit. Building Star would leverage two to three dollars of private investment for every dollar of federal investment.

Among the many products, services and materials covered by Building Star are building

envelope insulation, windows and doors, low-slope roofing, HVAC equipment, duct testing and sealing, energy management and monitoring systems, and lighting.

Rebates are calculated based upon the percentage of energy saved and average around 30 percent of the cost of a project. Business owners seeking to qualify for a rebate follow a straightforward process certifying that the work has been completed.

Both Building Star and Home Star are based on Welch's Retrofit for Energy and Environmental Performance (REEP) program, which was incorporated into the Waxman-Markey energy and climate bill (H.R. 2454) that passed the House in June 2009. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) cosponsored the companion Building Star bill in the Senate.