

With Rep. Peter Welch's support, the U.S. House on Thursday passed legislation that will support rural America by creating 20,000-40,000 jobs, investing in energy efficiency upgrades and saving 1.6 million families on their energy bills. Welch is a cosponsor of the legislation.

By a vote of 240 to 172, the House passed the Rural Energy Savings Program Act (H.R. 4785), which provides low-cost home improvement loans to consumers for energy efficiency upgrades.

"This legislation helps hardworking, rural families invest in their homes and reduce their energy use," Welch said. "By providing these low-cost loans, we facilitate a public-private partnership that is a win-win-win: for families, for our economy and for our energy future."

Working through the Rural Utilities Service, the legislation will make interest-free loans to eligible rural electric cooperatives for loans to qualified consumers to implement energy efficiency measures. These low-cost loans are then paid back through the consumer's energy bill using the energy savings to cover the cost of the loan. In addition to investing in energy efficiency improvements, the legislation will create valuable jobs in manufacturing and construction, industries that have been especially hard hit by the recession.

The legislation will now go to the Senate for consideration.