

[By Lisa Rathke](#)

Vermont's lone congressman who has introduced a bill that would more than double the amount of funding for the homeless in less populated states visited a shelter Friday to tout the legislation.

The Good Samaritan Haven homeless shelter in Barre has tenants filling its 26 beds, four extra cots in the dining room and just two part-time staffers. Right now, it gets \$30,000 annually from the federal Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homeless program known as PATH.

But under a bill introduced in October by Reps. Peter Welch, D-Vt., and Geoff Davis, R-Ky., the shelter could get as much as \$60,000 in aid.

"It's a very small amount of money that would make a very big difference," Welch said Friday on a visit to the Good Samaritan Haven.

Vermont and 21 other small states get the minimum level of \$300,000 of PATH funding per year, while larger states have received increases in recent years under a funding formula. The funding formula for the smaller states has stayed the same since 1991.

Welch and Davis want the funding formula revised so that that small-state minimum -- which covers at least six homeless shelters in Vermont -- increases from \$300,000 to \$700,000, Welch said.

Welch thinks the legislation has a chance because it requires a modest amount of funding -- more than \$9 million -- and has bipartisan support.

With winter coming, the homeless are finding themselves with fewer options.

Those who've been staying in campgrounds or tents in the warmer weather are now seeking shelters as the snow and cold arrives, said Kim Woolaver, director of Good Samaritan Haven.

PATH funding also supports the Brattleboro Drop-In Center; Neighborworks in West Rutland; Community Health Center in Burlington; Northeast Kingdom Community Action Group in Newport; and Green Mountain Support Group/Another Way in Montpelier.

The Good Samaritan Haven is opening an emergency overflow shelter at an area church to fill the need.

The services were invaluable to Anthony Lepore, who lived at the shelter for several months starting in June.

He said he lost everything after a divorce and was homeless.

"I came here and they took me in. They supported me and fed me and they took me into doctors and they did everything they had to do and within a 4 1/2 month period of time I was able to get my feet on the ground," he said.