

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), the lead advocate for energy efficiency incentives in the U.S. House, praised President Obama's announcement Thursday of a renewed focus on efficiency.

Speaking at Penn State University, Obama outlined a package of energy efficiency incentives designed to make commercial buildings 20 percent more efficient in the next decade. The plan mirrors the Building Star Energy Efficiency Act, Welch-authored legislation that would leverage private investment in efficiency by providing support to business owners.

In his remarks, Obama also called on Congress to pass Welch's Home Star Energy Retrofit Act, a residential efficiency bill that passed the House in May 2010, but which stalled in the Senate.

"President Obama understands that making commercial buildings cleaner and greener is central to job creation and innovation. Investing in energy efficiency is the best way to create new jobs, save businesses money and reduce harmful emissions," Welch said.

"Commercial and residential efficiency programs like Building Star and Home Star are perfectly primed for bipartisan progress in this new Congress. Democrats and Republicans alike can all agree that any new energy policy must include a serious effort to cut wasteful energy use while creating jobs."

President Obama's energy efficiency investment plan includes portions of three bills Welch introduced in the 111th Congress:

- First unveiled last July at Nelson Ace Hardware in Barre, Vt., the Building Star Energy Efficiency Act (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 provides direct incentives to business owners, encouraging them to invest their own capital in American-made retrofit materials, like building envelop insulation, windows and doors, low-slope roofing, HVAC equipment and energy management and monitoring systems.

- Like Building Star, the Home Star Energy Retrofit Act (H.R. 5019) would provide direct incentives to consumers to make their homes more energy efficient. Passed by the House last May by a bipartisan vote of 246 to 161, Home Star would help three million families save an estimated \$200-\$500 a year on their utility bills, resulting in ten billion dollars in savings over the next decade. The program provides both a prescriptive path called Silver Star, which provides up-front rebates for specific energy saving investments, and a performance path called Gold Star, which rewards homeowners for achieving comprehensive energy savings.

- First outlined in March 2009 at the Burlington, Vt., home of Jason Van Driesche and Susan Munkres, the Retrofit for Energy and Environmental Performance (REEP) Program (H.R. 1778), would increase energy efficiency 20 percent by retrofitting millions of homes and buildings. REEP directs the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency to provide direct cash incentives, interest rate subsidies and credit support to homeowners and business owners who invest in efficiency. Incorporated into the American Clean Energy and Security Act (H.R. 2454), REEP passed the House in July 2009 by a vote of 219 to 212.