





Energy efficiency bill introduced with Republican support

By Nicole Gaudiano, Gannett News Service • Thursday, April 15, 2010

WASHINGTON — Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., and other Democratic lawmakers introduced a “cash for caulkers” [energy](#) program as a bipartisan bill Wednesday, with Republican Rep. Vern Ehlers signing on as a co-sponsor.

The \$6 billion program, called Home Star, is designed to put 168,000 people to work by giving [homeowners](#)  incentives to become more energy efficient. The bill, which already passed a House subcommittee in draft form, will go before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce today. Lawmakers expect it to be approved.

“I’ve just been appalled over the years at how we are passing up golden opportunities to reduce our use of oil by simply not doing the most obvious thing, which is conservation of energy,” said Ehlers, of Michigan, during a news conference.

Welch said Ehlers, a physicist, will lend credibility to the bill, which is viewed as a job creator and money saver that resulted from a bipartisan effort. Ehlers is the only [Republican](#)  to sign on so far.

“I’ve been reaching out to Republicans and many, many are interested but they’re, I think, holding back, partly because of this overhang of partisanship that I think we’ve got to shed if we’re going to move ahead for America,” Welch said. “But I’m hopeful and I’m going to keep working on it.”

With Home Star, homeowners could qualify for Silver Star rebates of up to \$1,500 for specific energy efficiency improvements, capped at \$3,000 a home. Or, they could get a Gold Star \$3,000 rebate for a more comprehensive retrofit if the renovations result in 20 percent energy [savings](#). They could qualify for more Gold Star rebates if they continue to make improvements that reduce energy use.

Contact Nicole Gaudiano at ngaudiano@gannett.com.