

Senators Coons, Collins, Reed, Shaheen Re-introduce Bill to Enhance and Extend Landmark Energy Efficiency Programs

Weatherization Assistance Program has been the heart of the federal government's energy efficiency strategy for 39 years

WASHINGTON - U.S. Senators Chris Coons (D-Del.), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) on Wednesday re-introduced their legislation to strengthen and reauthorize the heart of the federal government's energy efficiency strategy — the Weatherization Assistance Program — and to reauthorize the vital work of the State Energy Program. S.703, the *Weatherization Enhancement and Local Energy Efficiency Investment and Accountability Act* would extend both programs for five more years.

“Saving energy is the first step to reducing our energy costs and increasing our nation's energy security,” **Senator Coons** said. “The Weatherization Assistance Program and State Energy Program have made it possible for millions of Americans to reap the benefits of a wide range of energy-efficient technologies and practices. Our bill will not only ensure that both landmark programs can continue to help make American homes safer, healthier, and more energy efficient, it also further enhances the Weatherization Assistance Program with a complementary, competitive grant program, and requires that the DOE establish strong, achievable standards for qualifying entities. This will ensure that even more families can benefit. This is common-sense, bipartisan legislation that I hope will once again earn strong support in the Senate.”

“Weatherization provides grants to permanently lower home energy costs for low-income families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities,” **Senator Collins** said. “This is particularly important for a state like Maine with some of the oldest housing stock in the nation and a high dependence on home heating oil. The State Energy Program is also supporting important state energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Programs such as these have a significant return on investment and help meet our national goals of saving energy, lowering costs, and energy independence.”

“Being smarter about how we use energy helps to strengthen our economy, improve our energy security, and protect the environment,” **Senator Reed** said. “This bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Weatherization Assistance Program and State Energy Program will help more Rhode Island families and businesses save on their energy bills. On a national level, investing in a cleaner, more efficient energy system is a cost-effective strategy to help increase our global competitiveness, support job growth, and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.”

“Weatherization projects are among the most effective ways to conserve energy, create jobs, and lower costs for New Hampshire families,” **Senator Shaheen** said. “The Weatherization Assistance Program has helped low-income families, seniors and individuals with disabilities make lasting and cost-effective energy efficiency improvements to their homes, while the State Energy Program has a history of success working across all sectors of the economy to support cost-effective energy efficiency improvements in New Hampshire and across the country. They're proven programs, and we ought to act on our bipartisan proposal to reauthorize them immediately.”

For 39 years, the Weatherization Assistance Program has assisted low-income families that lack the resources to make their homes more energy efficient. It is responsible for energy efficiency upgrades — including the installation of attic insulation and dense pack sidewall insulation, as well as air sealing, heating system repairs and, when necessary, replacements, duct sealing and insulation, and base load measures — in more than 7.4 million homes across the country, including more than 1 million homes in just the last four years. For every dollar invested by the Weatherization Assistance Program, participating American homeowners have saved more than \$2.50 on their energy costs.

The 40-year-old State Energy Program leverages federal investment with state and local funds to encourage strategic and programmatic energy-related activities to increase energy efficiency, develop alternative energy sources, promote energy development, and reduce energy dependency. For every dollar invested by the State Energy Program, more than \$7 in energy-cost savings have been realized.

The Congressional authorization for both programs expired in September 2012.

The *Weatherization Enhancement, and Local Energy Efficiency Investment and Accountability Act* would:

- Reauthorize and extend the WAP and SEP through 2020;
- Develop a competitive, leveraged grant program for non-profits that have a track record of success to access the WAP; and
- Require minimum professional standards for WAP contractors and workers, and require an independent quality assurance program.

The legislation has been endorsed by more than 20 organizations, including the National Association of State Energy Officials, Habitat for Humanity International, Natural Resources Defense Council, Alliance to Save Energy, American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, Energy Future Coalition, National Association for State Community Services Programs, and Rebuilding Together. A complete list is available at <http://coons.senate.gov/weatherization>.

"Once again, these Senators recognize the value of continuing these important programs," **National Association of State Energy Officials Executive Director David Terry** said. "These programs work cooperatively between the Federal government and the states, and help support private sector efforts to improve our nation's use of energy. We look forward to swift action supporting this important authorizing legislation."

"The Alliance to Save Energy applauds Senators Chris Coons, Susan Collins, Jack Reed and Jeanne Shaheen, for introducing bi-partisan legislation that will increase the affordability and comfort of housing for our most vulnerable American families while also helping communities by creating local jobs and stabilizing low income housing markets," **Alliance to Save Energy President Kateri Callahan** said. "The Weatherization Enhancement and Local Energy Efficiency Investment and Accountability Act reauthorizes programs that are proven to leverage

non-federal dollars and to return \$7 for every \$1 of federal funding spent. Congress should pass this important bill post haste.”

"In addition to creating health and environmental benefits, increasing and modernizing weatherization techniques will lower energy costs for individual families and create financial opportunities throughout communities in the U.S.," **Habitat for Humanity Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Reckford** said. "Every dollar that families save on energy usage can go toward other necessities. Habitat for Humanity strongly supports this legislation that will help families make residential energy efficient upgrades while creating an innovative and competitive grant program that enables nonprofits to help solve the ongoing energy efficiency challenges facing lower-income families."

"The National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP) thanks Senators Coons, Collins, Reed, and Shaheen for their diligent work to reauthorize the Weatherization Assistance Program and the State Energy Program," **NASCSPP Executive Director Jenae C. Bjelland** said. "These senators continue to demonstrate their leadership and commitment to proven cost-effective energy efficiency projects with a positive impact in communities throughout the nation. NASCSPP urges support of the senators' efforts for reauthorizing these valuable and effective programs."

A PDF of the legislation can be downloaded here:

<http://coons.senate.gov/download/weatherization-legislation>