



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 2010

Contact:

Mike Westling (Merkley) – 202-224-7871

Michael Teague (Pryor) – 501-324-6336

Nkenge Harmon (Stabenow) – 202-224-1437

Meghan Dubyak (Brown) – 202-224-3978

Michael Briggs (Sanders) – 202-228-6492

Merkley, Pryor Announce Energy-efficiency Renovations Program for Commercial Buildings

“Building Star” Would Create Thousands of Jobs, Benefit Small Businesses, Lower Energy Bills

WASHINGTON, DC – Oregon’s Senator Jeff Merkley and Senator Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) introduced legislation Thursday to create jobs by promoting the installation of energy-efficient renovations in commercial and multi-family residential buildings. Merkley and Pryor were joined by Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and Ben Cardin (D-Md.) as original co-sponsors of the “Building Star” legislation.

By utilizing rebates and low-interest loans, the “Building Star” program leverages between two and three dollars in private investment for every federal dollar spent.

“Clean energy is not only the next great growth industry, but it’s an engine for job creation today,” Senator Merkley said. “Energy-efficiency programs like ‘Building Star’ will put Americans to work in construction and manufacturing and save small businesses money as we strive for American energy independence.”

“Buildings represent 40 percent of the energy used in the United States, and many have old equipment that waste energy and money,” Senator Pryor said. “Investing in energy efficiency retrofits for industrial, commercial, and multi-family buildings can drive economic recovery by saving small businesses money,

spurring construction and manufacturing, and creating hundreds of thousands of good jobs across America.”

"We have the opportunity to create clean energy jobs and revitalize our economy while protecting the environment," Senator Stabenow said. "With this bill, we will be able to spur growth in Michigan's hardest hit sectors, like construction and manufacturing, while saving families and small businesses across the country billions of dollars on energy bills."

"Retrofitting businesses to reduce their energy usage isn't just about protecting the environment and cutting energy costs – it's about rebuilding our economy, too," Senator Brown said. "Investments in energy efficiency retrofitting can spur economic growth in Ohio's manufacturing sector and increase property values. A national retrofitting agenda can generate billions of dollars in savings and hundreds of thousands of new jobs."

"I strongly support efforts to move toward energy independence through increased energy efficiency, which reduces emissions while creating jobs," Senator Sanders said. "That's why I support ways for states and local governments to help homeowners and businesses finance the upfront costs of energy-efficiency measures."

In addition to rebates to reduce the cost of energy-saving measures such as high-efficiency heating and improved insulation, "Building Star" will also extend low-interest financing options to small businesses and other building owners. Such financing arrangements help building owners with the upfront cost of a building renovation by letting them pay off the cost out of the savings on their energy bill.

"Building Star" is similar to "Home Star," a parallel program put forward by Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M), Mark Warner (D-Va.), Bernie Sanders (D-Vt.), and Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) that offers energy-efficiency assistance to homeowners. President Barack Obama announced his support Tuesday for the residential property "Home Star" program, including the financing options recommended by Senator Merkley.

"Building Star" would begin creating jobs immediately and is projected to create as many as 150,000 jobs in some of the economy's hardest-hit sectors including construction, manufacturing, and distribution over the next two years. In addition, "Building Star" is expected to save building owners more than \$3 billion on their energy bills annually by reducing enough peak electricity demand to avoid the need for thirty-three 300-megawatt power plants. It will also reduce the pollution that contributes to climate change by 21 million metric tons, or the equivalent of nearly 4 million cars' emissions each year, according to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy.

"Senator Merkley's Building Star proposal recognizes the role commercial building retrofits can play in providing immediate job creation while ensuring the nation's existing buildings can fulfill their potential as energy efficient 21st century structures," said Polyisocyanurate Insulation Manufacturers Association President and CEO Jared Blum. "Commercial buildings retrofits are an essential part of any Congressional effort to chart an effective course for the nation's construction industry recovery program."

“The Insulators Union is proud to support ‘Building Star,’ said International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Vice President Terry Lynch. “Our Union is currently suffering over twenty percent unemployment. ‘Building Star’ will create and preserve jobs for thousands of insulators and other workers, make commercial buildings more energy efficient and help jump start the construction job market.”

"Building Star is a cost-effective way to create thousands of American jobs by helping make commercial buildings more energy efficient," said Real Estate Roundtable President and CEO Jeffrey DeBoer. "We offer our full support to Senator Merkley's bill, which provides an innovative solution to the challenge of job creation."

The financing components of “Building Star” and “Home Star” were first put forward when Merkley and Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) introduced the Consumer and Business Clean Energy Financing Act of 2009.

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