

SHAHEEN, COLLEAGUES INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN RURAL ENERGY SAVINGS PROGRAM

March 10, 2010

(Washington, D.C.)-U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen, with Congressional colleagues, today introduced the bipartisan, bicameral Rural Energy Savings Program (RESP) Act which will help spur economic recovery and create jobs in rural New Hampshire and other rural communities nationwide. The legislation would provide funding to rural electric cooperatives to make homes and businesses more energy efficient, helping consumers save on their energy costs.

"Retrofitting and weatherizing buildings is one of our greatest opportunities to create jobs and help with our continued economic recovery. This legislation will help create jobs in rural areas hit hard during these difficult times and help families and businesses reduce their energy bills," said Shaheen. "We can kick-start our construction industry by providing new sources of financing to retrofit homes and businesses. We need to invest in America, and this legislation does just that."

The Rural Energy Savings Program will allow individual electric co-ops to apply to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to borrow money to fund local energy efficiency programs, which will create jobs in the construction and building retrofit industry. When the RUS loan is approved, the co-ops, in turn, will provide the money in low-interest micro-loans to consumer residences or businesses to cover energy efficiency improvements, such as air sealing, insulation, HVAC systems, boilers, roofs and other improvements that will produce sufficient energy savings. The loans will be repaid through a charge on the customer's utility bill, so consumers can "pay as they save." RESP is designed so that consumers will save money immediately on their energy bills while the loan is repaid, saving most families and businesses hundreds of dollars annually.

The New Hampshire Rural Electric Cooperative has been operating a similar program for more than five years, called the *SmartSTART* (Savings Through Affordable Retrofit Technologies) program, which helps New Hampshire small businesses make energy efficiency improvements and repay those investments over time. The Cooperative wants to expand its program to residential customers, but access to capital at reasonable rates has prevented them from doing so. The Rural Energy Savings Program would make that upfront capital available and help

contribute to our economic recovery by retrofitting homes and businesses in New Hampshire and across the country.

"For half a decade, the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative has been helping small businesses become more energy efficient by upgrading their buildings and equipment. Our customer-owners have seen savings over time, and our experience shows us that this program works. The Rural Energy Savings Program would allow us to expand our existing program so that New Hampshire families and small businesses can cut electricity costs, and we thank Senator Shaheen for supporting this legislation," said Ray Gosney, Executive Vice President of Strategy & Governmental Relations, New Hampshire Electric Cooperative.

In addition to Shaheen, the legislation is also coauthored by Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Richard Lugar (R-IL), Michael Bennett (D-CO) and Timothy Johnson (D-SD). In the House, the bill is co-sponsored by Representatives James Clyburn (D-SC), Tom Perriello (D-VA), Ed Whitfield (R-KY), and John Spratt (D-SC).

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