

## **Welch's office goes 'carbon neutral'** *Representative to co-sponsor the Safe Climate Act*

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### ***Statement of Paul Burns, VPIRG Executive Director***

Congressman Peter Welch continued the tradition of Vermont leadership on global warming today when he announced his intention to co-sponsor legislation aimed at reducing carbon emissions by 80% by the year 2050. Senators Bernie Sanders and Patrick Leahy are both original co-sponsors of a similar bill introduced into the U.S. Senate last month.

Welch took the additional step of announcing that his congressional offices in Vermont and in Washington will be the first in the nation to go "carbon neutral." Welch will offset the greenhouse gas emissions related to his travel and other office activities by providing financial support for two Vermont renewable energy projects.

By taking this action, Peter Welch is putting his money where his mouth is on global warming. He deserves credit for finding a way to provide direct support to Vermont's economy and environment while addressing one of the most serious problems we face today.

We need exactly this kind of innovation and leadership in Washington and here at home if we are to successfully reverse course on climate change. Unfortunately, the budget released today by the President did not demonstrate similar thoughtful innovation.

While we applaud the increases in funding for solar energy (\$65 million increase from \$83 million in '07 estimated) and biomass (\$87 million increase from \$92 million in '07 estimated) and the phase out of the oil and gas research and development program, the rest of the Administration's energy budget fails to move us toward a cleaner and more secure energy future. Despite these increases, the renewable energy and energy efficiency budget continues to be dwarfed by spending on coal and nuclear power, with enormous increases in funding for nuclear programs (\$308 million increase of '07 estimated). This one year increase is greater than the combined budgets of the solar and wind energy programs (\$148 and \$40 million respectively).

Meanwhile, the President's budget eliminates funding for geothermal energy (from \$25 million '07 estimated), and slashes \$115 million from the weatherization program.

Clearly, with an Administration budget like this, we will need continued strong leadership from Congressman Welch and the entire Vermont delegation.

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