

# Historic Preservation: Support for Retrofits of Older and Historic Buildings

Not since the 1970's have Americans been so interested in the energy efficiency of their homes, offices and institutions. The desire to decrease our country's dependency on foreign oil and the concern about climate change has moved bills in Congress and led to policy initiatives for increasing energy efficiency in buildings.

The construction, operation and demolition of buildings accounts for well over 40 percent of the United States' greenhouse gas emissions. But preservation -- reusing and retrofitting our existing buildings -- can reduce these emissions dramatically. In fact, our existing buildings are one of our greatest renewable resources and their preservation is inherently sustainable.

Too often, however, many see demolition and new construction as the solution for increasing energy efficiency. Likewise, many believe that window replacement and other damaging alterations are necessary to improve the energy performance of older buildings. In fact, the greenest building is often the one that already exists, and there are myriad ways to reduce energy used in our older buildings.

We ask Congress to support meaningful incentives for retaining and retrofitting energy-related components of historic and older buildings such as: 1) the Retrofit for Energy and Environmental Performance Program (H.R. 1778), introduced by Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT), and now part of the energy/climate bills in Congress; 2) the energy-efficiency supplement in the Community Restoration and Revitalization Act (H.R. 3715); and 3) and HOME STAR legislation, amended to include incentives for storm windows. Congress should avoid programs that simply incentivize saving energy through purchasing unnecessary products, particularly replacement windows, that could destroy the character of historic buildings across the nation.

## What is at Stake?

- We are losing old windows unnecessarily at an alarming rate with the incentives Congress is approving for new replacement windows. It takes upwards of 40 years to recover in energy savings what is spent to replace historic wood windows and the typical replacement window often fails within 20 years. Building owners should have a viable option to retain perfectly reusable historic windows in achieving energy savings.
- Preservation is about jobs. Every time a building is rehabilitated or retrofit for greater energy efficiency, or historic materials are restored and reused, competent, specialized trades are employed. More people are put to work in the trades associated with building rehabilitation than in new construction, and preservation should not lose out in Congressional efforts to stimulate job growth.
- The move toward more sustainable communities and creating more energy-efficient buildings also means training and educating the workforce in the special needs of historic and older buildings. As Congress develops proposals to educate and train a "new 21st-century workforce" let's make sure preservation is front-and-center.

## Our Request:

**1. Support Energy Efficiency Legislation that Recognizes the Inherent Value of Historic Buildings and Materials, Such as Windows, and Does Not Incentivize Needless and Damaging Alteration.**

## 2. Support:

**1) The Retrofit for Energy and Environmental Performance Program (H.R. 1778)**

**2) The "energy-efficiency supplement" to the historic tax credit in the CRRRA (H.R. 3715)**

**3) HOME STAR legislation, amended to include incentives for storm windows (Bill to be introduced 3/4/10)**