

Washington, DC -- With bipartisan support, the U.S. House of Representatives passed an amendment offered yesterday by U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) to enable area schools to use federal school modernization grants to invest in locally-produced alternative energy – saving taxpayers money, building local businesses, and improving educational resources for our children.

“This amendment truly represents an investment in our future –modernizing our schools with locally-produced renewable energy is a win for our children, for our businesses, and for the future of our Upstate economy,” **said Arcuri, whose amendment would help area schools reduce costs by investing in locally produced renewable energy systems**

. “As we upgrade our schools to provide the best learning environment, we also have the chance to invest in local businesses like Schuyler Wood Pellet and reduce energy costs for area school districts.”

Arcuri was joined by Representatives Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH), Paul Hodes (D-NH) and Peter Welch (D-VT) in offering an amendment to the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facility Act (H.R. 3021) which would enable a local educational agency receiving a federal grant to use the grant for solar, photovoltaic, wind, geothermal, or biomass, including wood pellet, renewable energy generation systems. Arcuri’s amendment is supported by the National Education Association.

Under Arcuri’s amendment, local alternative energy companies, like New England Wood Pellet’s plant in Schuyler, NY, could join with local school districts to upgrade educational facilities with cost effective alternative energy systems. The \$12 million Schuyler wood pellet plant has been operating since December 2007 and brought 18 direct and 75 indirect jobs to the greater Utica region.

“Heating systems using renewable, carbon-neutral fuels such as wood pellets offer tremendous environmental and cost savings advantages for public officials looking at sustainable building,” **said Charlie Niebling, General Manager of New England Wood Pellet.**

“Congressman Arcuri’s efforts to bring attention to this important opportunity are very timely given rapidly escalating fossil energy costs and the urgent need to address climate change.”

During a recent visit to the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES, Arcuri received a first-hand look at the

benefits of schools utilizing geothermal to heat and cool their buildings. Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES completed installation last July of a closed-loop geothermal system which requires substantially less energy than normal. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority recently conducted a study that found the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES' geothermal system a remarkable 43% more energy efficient than a building built to standard code.

**Dr. David Boyle, Assistant Superintended Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES said,** “Our campus relies on the renewable energy source of our geothermal wells. This is important for putting money into student programs rather than utilities. Our campus uses 43% less energy than minimal code requirements. We are very appreciative of Congressman Arcuri’s efforts on behalf of green energy and his support of our students.”

**Dr. Cornelius B. Murphy, President, State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry said,** “Congressman Arcuri’s amendment to the ‘21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act’, joining with Mr. Welch of Vermont and Mr. Hodes and Ms. Shea-Porter of New Hampshire, is precisely the kind of forward thinking the Nation needs to make a real difference in helping schools reduce their costly, high-energy use. Allowing these federal grants to be used for renewable energy generation and heating systems through an array of renewable energy sources and technologies will move schools to improve efficiency, conservation, cost savings and reduce their carbon emissions. In addition, it is just this sort of program that provides educational opportunities for our youth to study and appreciate the environmental benefits of these critical green projects.”

SUNY-ESF is home to the SUNY Center for Sustainable and Renewable Energy, a 64-campus research and development clearinghouse in the critical area of energy sufficiency and sustainability.

The 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facility Act authorizes \$6.4 billion in fiscal year 2009 for public school modernization, renovation, and repair projects that are intended to improve the teaching and learning climate, energy efficiency, and the environmental impact of our nation’s school.

The 21st Century High-Performing Public Schools Facilities Act (H.R. 3021) would:

- Require the majority of funds (90 percent by 2013) be used for projects that meet green

building standards.

Allows states to reserve one percent of funds to administer the program and to develop a plan to create a statewide database of schools' facilities, modernization and repair needs, energy uses, carbon footprints, and schools' energy efficiency quality plans.

Requires school districts to publicly report the educational, energy and environmental benefits of projects, how they comply with the green building requirements, and the percentage of funds used for projects at low-income and rural schools.

Since taking office, Arcuri has championed legislation that will invest in alternative energy technology to bring consumer costs down and grow our domestic economy.

In May, Arcuri, a member of the House Committee on Rules, sponsored and managed the rule for consideration of the Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act (H.R. 6049), which included \$18 million in tax incentives for investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency to retain and create hundreds of thousands of green jobs.

Arcuri also strongly supported the historic and bipartisan Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, signed into law at the end of last year, which will increase vehicle fuel efficiency standards and help save American families \$700 to \$1,000 per year at the gas pump. New building, appliance and lighting efficiency standards included in the new law will save consumers \$400 billion through 2030. Additionally, the law invests in new "green collar" jobs through incentives and initiatives for American produced renewable energy.

A copy of Arcuri's floor speech in support of H.R. 3021, as prepared for delivery, is below:

**U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)**  
**In the House of Representatives**  
**Arcuri/Shea-Porter/Welch/Hodes Amendment to H.R. 3021**  
**Wednesday, June 4, 2008**

I thank my colleague from New Hampshire for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of this amendment, which would allow schools to purchase and install renewable energy generation systems.

Our amendment would allow schools to choose from a diverse selection of renewable energy sources, but I would like to specifically highlight two that pose significant potential: geothermal and biomass wood pellet systems.

Just last week, during the Memorial Day district work period, I had the opportunity to tour Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES in Auburn, NY and received a first-hand look at a geothermal heating and cooling system in action.

The Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES completed installation last July of a closed-loop geothermal system. The system includes 200 wells around campus, 330 feet deep that tap into earth's constant ground temperature at that level of 55 degrees. The system circulates that 55 degree air temperature year round throughout buildings on campus. In the winter, the system relies on a boiler to slightly increase the air temperature on campus to a comfortable level of 68 degrees – requiring substantially less energy than normal. And in the warm summer months, the system needs no additional energy whatsoever to cool the buildings on campus.

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority recently conducted a study that found the system to be a remarkable 43% more energy efficient than a building built to standard code. While it might be too soon to quantify the actual monthly cost savings, I think it's safe to say that a building 43% more energy efficient will realize significant cost savings in the future and allow Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES to spend resources where they're needed most – on better educating students.

The second component of this amendment I wish to highlight is wood pellet energy. Wood has the potential to meet our nation's energy needs in a safe and environmentally responsible way. Studies show that communities can save significant taxpayer funds by switching to wood energy for heating schools. For example, communities can save as much as 50 percent over natural gas, 80 percent over propane, 80 percent over electric heat, and 50 percent over oil by switching to wood energy.

Especially in the Upstate New York district that I represent – with its bountiful forest resources – wood energy such as biomass offers an array of economic and environmental benefits compared to traditional fossil fuels.

Both geothermal and wood energy systems can be fueled by renewable, local resources. This keeps energy dollars circulating in the local and regional economy instead of flowing to other nations. These systems also aid local budgets by providing lower and more stable fuel costs for schools. Investments like these benefit the whole community by relieving pressure on local budgets and associated tax rates, leading to economically healthier communities.

Unlike some other renewable energy systems, both geothermal and biomass systems can run continuously and provide a constant level of power throughout the day.

Beyond the amendment my colleagues and I are offering today, it's also worth noting the overall benefits of the underlying legislation. Everyone in this chamber – Republican or Democrat – understands the importance of lowering energy prices. The 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act represents a trifecta of sound public policy: 1) it improves the education system for our children; 2) it does so in an environmentally friendly way that decreases our dependence on finite fossil fuels; and, 3) it creates jobs for hardworking middle class families.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment and the underlying legislation. Thank you. I yield back the balance of my time.

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