

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the House of Representatives passed the [HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2007](#) (H.R. 3524) by a [vote of 271 to 130](#)

. The reauthorization requires new HOPE VI developments be built to green standards. Congressman John Olver initially introduced the green measure as a stand-alone bill in May.

HOPE VI, a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant program, is designed to revitalize the Nation's most severely distressed public housing. The green housing provision would require new HOPE VI developments to meet Green Communities Criteria for residential buildings and a green rating system of the Secretary of HUD's choosing for commercial buildings. The bill would also ensure that HUD will make planning and technical assistance grants available to applicants.

Green Communities criteria promote environmentally smart site planning, energy efficiency, and the use of building materials that promote healthier outdoor and indoor environments. Some specific criteria include locating new developments near public transit as well as promoting Energy Star appliances, water conserving fixtures, and low volatile organic compound paint.

"With this vote, the 110th Congress had its first opportunity to live up to the spirit of the landmark energy legislation that recently became law," Congressman John Olver said. "Addressing climate change in a government with shared power, with a Republican president and a Democratic Congress with a slim majority, has been an uphill battle. But today we took an important first step toward the Federal government holding itself to a higher standard."

Buildings are responsible for almost 40 percent of U.S. energy consumption, with residential housing accounting for more than half of this total. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, in 2005 the residential sector also accounted for 21 percent of U.S. energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, a major cause of global warming.

HUD's current energy efficiency standards for HOPE VI developments provide limited incentives to encourage green building. For example, under the current selection criteria, HUD awards just one point out a total of 125 for the use of Energy Star products.

While a number of states and cities have already incorporated green building criteria into their affordable housing programs, if this bill is enacted, HOPE VI would be the first federal housing program with green requirements.

"Numerous cities and states already require green community standards. And they do so because it makes good sense. The small added construction costs pay for themselves within five years because green homes are 30 percent more efficient than traditional homes. That means that low income families and public housing authorities are reaping the benefits from lower utility bills over the 50 to 100 year lifespan of the housing," Congressman John Olver said.

Congressman John Olver is the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Housing, Urban Development and related agencies.

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