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Saving Money and Reducing Your Home Energy Costs

Last year, a third shift of auto workers at a GM plant in Lordstown were notified that they would go back to work on the assembly line, in part because hundreds of thousands of Americans used vouchers to buy new vehicles. Production lines at other Ohio plants saw a steady return of workers, and dealerships from Cleveland to Columbus to Cincinnati reported new sales.

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While still facing challenges, our auto industry received a significant boost from the "Cash for Clunkers" program, which saved or created thousands of jobs across Ohio and the nation. This initiative helped American consumers purchase nearly 700,000 new vehicles – adding nearly one percent to the third-quarter GDP growth at the time, while improving the fuel efficiency of the cars on our nation's roads.



Now, we need to turn our attention to other products manufactured in Ohio. That's why I've cosponsored legislation to create a Home Star Energy Efficiency Retrofit Program, which would help create thousands of new jobs, reduce home energy costs, and help fuel our economic recovery.

The Home Star Energy Efficiency Retrofit Program, also known as "Cash for Caulkers," would provide incentives for homeowners and residential construction contractors to make energy-efficient investments in homes across Ohio.

The housing crisis has hit Ohio hard – and not just with the depreciated value of homes. The construction companies and industries around the housing market – from contractors to electricians to product installers – are struggling to find jobs and new construction projects. Insulation manufacturers, for example, are running at 60 percent capacity. Investing in home energy retrofits would spur immediate job creation in manufacturing and the residential construction and renovation business industries as the housing market recovers.

Ohio consumers looking for simple, energy-efficient upgrades to their homes would be

eligible for rebates of up to 50 percent, or \$1,000-\$1,500 to replace insulation, water heaters, HVAC units, or doors and windows. The program would also establish new financing options to help consumers afford critical energy-efficiency retrofits to their homes.

Ohioans can also receive Home Star rebates for energy-saving investments, whether purchased at large, national home improvement chains or small, independent neighborhood dealers. When you walk into one of these stores, you'll receive a discount right at the check-out counter. It's that simple and quick.

These retrofits will not only create jobs, they'll also reduce energy consumption and lower monthly energy costs. Approximately 80 percent of homes in America are under-insulated, which means more heat escaping through windows or cold air flowing through doors. Energy-efficient windows and doors or heating and cooling systems reduce utility bills, while increasing the value of the most important asset for many Americans – their homes.

Home Star provides incentives for home owners to save on energy costs and creates economic activity in our communities. Nearly all of the raw materials, insulation heating/cooling systems, and windows and doors will be built in the United States – a key priority in spending tax payer dollars when rebuilding our economy.



For middle-class families, the program will also help save hundreds of dollars a year on energy costs per household. Average monthly household bills in the U.S. run at about \$2,200, but approximately half of that goes to energy costs. In 2011, it is estimated American homeowners can save more than \$1 billion in energy costs and \$9.2 billion over ten years through Home Star.

For decades, Ohio has been home to leading manufacturers and cutting-edge manufacturers. Industries ranging from the auto sector to biotechnology to aerospace are supported because of Ohio's strong manufacturing supply chain. Simply put, Ohio is on the verge of becoming the national leader in the clean energy manufacturing.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has created or saved more clean energy jobs in Ohio than in any other state. Programs like Home Star will strengthen that progress. During a time when jobs are tough to come by, Home Star is a simple and quick energy-saving program that will create good-paying, sustainable jobs for Ohioans.

Sincerely,

Sherrod Brown



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