

# DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

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## The Washington Connection

by Jim Hadel  
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### Ask Congress to Pass Bills that Create New Jobs NOW

The United States Congress has worked hard over the last year pushing legislation that directly affects working men and women. Recently passed healthcare reform will hopefully assist with the soaring costs of insuring our members and their families. Current debate on Capitol Hill regarding immigration reform will undeniably affect the roofing industry. The Employee Free Choice Act, a bill that would establish a more equitable system for employees who want to join a union, has unfortunately, for the time being, been delayed in the legislative process.

These are all important issues to the Roofers Union. Nevertheless, with unemployment rates of nearly 25% in the construction industry, our top priority right now should be jobs-related legislation. There has been some progress: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, for example, has generated a large amount of work for members of the building trades. But we are still faced with historically high unemployment rates in our industry. With that in mind, I have been working with several of our local unions and representatives of the National Roofing Contractors Association on two significant pieces of legislation that will benefit our members and contractors: GREETA and Building Star.

First and foremost is the Green Roof Energy Efficiency Tax Act (GREETA-H.R. 426), which will immediately create new “green” jobs in construction and manufacturing—specifically in the roofing sector. GREETA, which I spoke about in last quarter’s issue, is a bipartisan solution to a problem that restricts the movement towards energy-efficient commercial roofs. The problem is the Internal Revenue Code that requires roofs to be depreciated over a 39-year schedule, even though studies have found the average lifespan of a roof to be only 17½ years. Building owners have no incentive to replace older, failing roofs with new, energy-efficient systems before the 39-year schedule is reached.

GREETA will set a more realistic 20-year depreciation schedule for roof systems that meet a specified energy standard. By increasing the demand for energy-efficient roofing systems, GREETA will create an estimated **40,000 new jobs** in the roofing manufacturing and contracting industry. It could also add approximately \$1 billion in taxable annual revenue from our industry, in addition to reducing carbon emissions and energy

consumption. The GREETA bill was introduced by Reps. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) and Wally Herger (R-CA) and has 36 co-sponsors to date.

Secondly, the Building Star Energy Efficiency Act of 2010 (S. 3079), introduced by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), is a bill designed to jumpstart job creation in building trades and manufacturing industries by encouraging energy-saving retrofits of commercial and multi-family buildings. Building Star is supported by the Roofers and numerous other unions, contractor associations, manufacturers and energy-efficiency experts.

Building Star will provide rebates and tax incentives to building owners who install energy-efficient equipment and products in 2010 and 2011. This includes energy-efficient, low-sloped roofs. If passed, this legislation could create up to **25,000 jobs** for every \$1 billion of federal investment. A \$6-billion investment would generate 150,000 jobs. In addition, the federal investment would be leveraged with private investments of \$2-\$3 for every one federal dollar. Therefore, Building Star could actually spur the total market activity in construction and manufacturing to the \$18- to \$24-billion level with a \$6-billion federal investment. This means jobs for our members.

GREETA and Building Star would provide a tremendous boost to the roofing industry and increase our potential to secure work for the members of our union. We have focused lots of time and effort on a national level to support this legislation by making numerous visits to key members of the House and Senate—both in Washington and locally—and encouraging them to support these bills. Several local unions have written, called or visited their congressmen and senators requesting support. At the recent Building and Construction Trades legislative conference in Washington, DC, several union roofers lobbied their representatives for GREETA and Building Star legislation with much success.

The results of our efforts have been significant, especially on GREETA, with several legislators indicating they will support, and in some cases co-sponsor, the bills. We will continue our work on GREETA and Building Star legislation and similar jobs-related legislation that will provide work for our members, and we hope that our elected representatives understand the urgency these issues bring to our members and the Roofers Union. ■



*International Vice President/Washington Representative Jim Hadel speaks with Congressman Kendrick Meek (D-FL, pictured left) about the importance of passing GREETA legislation.*