

**Brilliot, Michael**

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**From:** linda@lezottelaw.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 20, 2009 10:06 AM  
**To:** Brilliot, Michael; Crabtree, Andrew  
**Subject:** From ClimateWire -- ENERGY EFFICIENCY: DOE prepares to launch energy-saving labels for retrofitted homes

**This ClimateWire story was sent to you by:** linda@lezottelaw.com

**Personal message:** Michael & Andrew, I thought this might be of interest to the TF and to staff regarding the green building goals & policies. linda

ClimateWire  
THE POLITICS AND BUSINESS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

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**[ENERGY EFFICIENCY: DOE prepares to launch energy-saving labels for retrofitted homes](#)** *(Tuesday, October 20, 2009)*

**Saqib Rahim, E&E reporter**

The government will seek to label existing homes with energy data in order to promote retrofitting, according to a report released by Vice President Joe Biden yesterday.

The report says these energy labels will address a main reason homeowners overlook efficiency fixes that could save them money and energy: They don't know about them.

"When consumers see the Energy Star label on a dishwasher or a refrigerator, they know they are getting an energy efficient product and they can take the savings into account as they decide what to purchase," the report says. "New homes can qualify for an Energy Star label but there is no similar label for existing homes that have undergone retrofits."

An Energy Department spokeswoman, Jen Stutsman, said the administration had wanted to establish a user-friendly way of rating building efficiency, in the same way that miles per gallon is the measurement used to rate cars.

To that end, DOE, U.S. EPA and other agencies will develop a standard metric that will form the basis of an energy label for homes, whether they are new or old.

The report says DOE would promote this measurement to states, hoping to interest them in using a common national standard.

DOE has already begun work, according to Stutsman, and it hopes to use the labels in pilot programs this fall.

**A sticker for potential home buyers**

Labels can be designed in different ways, but their main purpose is to give buyers and owners an easy way to understand whether a building is energy-efficient or not. According to the

report, a label would also prove useful for others in the home business -- the builders, real estate agents, auditors and lenders who stand to make money from retrofits.

Efficiency advocates have ranked retrofits among the best ways to cut emissions and save consumers money. Buildings cause 40 percent of the United States' carbon dioxide emissions, but experts agree that no more than 3 percent of the building stock turns over each year -- a fact that spotlights older buildings as the chief offenders.

One proposal for labeling would show, in a simple illustration, how much energy a building uses in comparison to how much it could use if functioning properly.

The proposal was originally included in the House climate bill sponsored by Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Ed Markey (D-Mass.). Specifically, it would have encouraged states to adopt these labels for both existing and new buildings.

The real estate industry protested, arguing that the labels would bid down home prices even if buyers had no intention of investing in efficiency. In a compromise brokered by Rep. Ed Perlmutter (D-Colo.), existing buildings were omitted. Perlmutter said the move helped garner key votes for the Waxman-Markey bill, which passed the House 219-212 in June ([ClimateWire](#), Aug. 4).

The DOE label will include similar information, Stutsman said: how much energy the house is designed to use, how much it actually uses, and up to a dozen cost-effective measures to make the home more efficient.

### **Is a house like a car, or an appliance?**

DOE is still weighing how the label should look and what information it should include. "What we're trying to determine is whether a house is closer to a car ... or if it's closer to an appliance," Stutsman said.

Cars are rated on an absolute scale -- with a number that says how far the car can drive on a gallon of gas. But appliances are on a relative scale -- they get the Energy Star if they are more efficient than most of the current models available.

Another priority, Stutsman said, will be raising public consciousness. DOE's new label will come with a new marketing campaign aimed at cluing people in about their homes' energy waste -- and the savings that can come with a retrofit.

According to different estimates, Stutsman said, the Energy Star label has a brand recognition of 75 to 80 percent. "What we're looking for is to develop a similar recognition with this label," she said.

The labeling announcement drew cautious support from the National Association of Home Builders, a group that has highlighted the importance of old buildings but opposed new federal "mandates" that would affect builders' business.

Bill Killmer, NAHB's executive vice president for advocacy, said that just labeling new buildings is akin to requiring miles-per-gallon stickers only for Toyota Priuses, not for gas-guzzling SUVs. "We're for labeling in that it would be applied with equity across the board and not just be a labeling requirement for newer, more energy-efficient housing stock," he said.

He said he would need to learn more about the specifics of the labeling program before taking a final stance on it. A spokesman for the National Association of Realtors declined comment while the organization reviewed the report.

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122 C St., Ste. 722, NW, Wash., D.C. 20001.  
Phone: 202-628-6500. Fax: 202-737-5299.  
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