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Caldwell of Caldwell and Johnson testifies in D.C.

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A familiar voice was raised in favor of U.S. Senate Bill 1379, the Energy Efficiency in Housing Act of 2009, on June 30th as David Caldwell Jr. of Caldwell and Johnson Inc., a leading "green" builder and remodeler in Rhode Island and a member of the Rhode Island Builders Association's board of directors, testified on Capitol Hill.

Caldwell testified before the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation and Community Development at the request of Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.). The bill itself was sponsored by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), who suggested that Caldwell testify.

Highlights of the Energy Efficiency in Housing Act of 2009 include:

- * Jumpstarting the market for "green" mortgages that reflect the financial savings of energy-efficient and location-efficient homes,
- * Requirements that energy costs be considered in appraisals,
- * A revolving loan fund to states to fund renewable energy upgrades,
- * A provision to collect data on energy-efficient and location-efficient mortgages, and
- * Establishing "green" banking centers to educate the public about the financial options and benefits for energy conservation.

Caldwell is co-chair of the Advocacy Committee of the Rhode Island Green Building Council, and is a leading advocate and educator in Rhode Island in the field of green technology and construction. During his testimony, Caldwell spoke in strong support of the bill, citing his own experience in green building. He testified that green building and remodeling can be an economically viable business model, a means by which homeowners can dramatically save money through reducing utility costs, and be very environmentally beneficial.

"In effect, the Energy Efficiency in Housing Act is that rare issue on whose merits everyone can agree," Caldwell said.

Caldwell told the subcommittee that, while everyone agrees that green homes can save money, lenders currently are unwilling to consider the long-term savings involved and are reluctant to use energy-efficient mortgage products because they tend to involve more work. He recommended that lenders be required to give consumers more information on their options for an energy-efficient home, as "people get more information when they purchase a box of cereal than they do when they buy a house."

The legislation is supported by a diverse group of organizations from the shelter industry, such as the National Association of Home Builders, as well as such non-profit public interest organizations as the U.S. Green Building Council. For more information on the bill, visit www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=s111-1379.

Paul Eno is the owner and editor-in-chief of New River Press, Woonsocket and is the editor of the monthly RIBA newsletter, The Rhode Island Builder Report.

