

HIRE Act of 2009

There is a proposal before the House of the United States Congress called the **Home Improvements Revitalize the Economy Act of 2009** – also known as the **HIRE Act of 2009**. It has been referred to the House Ways and Means Committee and will be taken up when the House reconvenes on September 8th. This bill is meant to stimulate the economy by giving homeowners a tax deduction on the purchase of home furnishings and building supplies, as well as the cost of the labor to install these items.

The deductions are \$1000 for single tax payers and \$2000 for joint filers. These amounts are doubled if the products purchased meet “recognized environmental standards”. These “environmental standards” are “LEED, Green Globe, Energy Star, and any other widely recognized national or industry environmental standards having a positive life cycle analysis.” From my investigation of Green and Sustainable building products, most industries have some kind of certification or labeling or independent verifying body which attests to the products’ wholesomeness. Just make sure the product is covered by the HIRE Act, if you want the deduction.

Some items for your home are not covered under the HIRE Act. Those not covered include “home electronics (including televisions, radios, entertainment systems, and computers), home appliances (including refrigerators, ovens, dishwashers, clothes washers and dryers), house-wares, artwork, photographs, and other home decorations, and property for which depreciation (or amortization in lieu of depreciation) is allowable.”

The big question is whether or not the HIRE Act will come out of committee and get passed. We in the 8th District (which is all of Bucks County and a sliver that goes over to Willow Grove and Roselyn areas) are served by Representative Patrick Murphy. I know he would love to hear from you in support of the HIRE Act.

What is the best way to let Rep. Murphy know your opinion? If you go to one of his town-hall meetings you can tell him. Another way is to visit his web site and from there send him an email. Here are some suggestions from govtrack.us about the best way to get your voice heard on this issue: Visit your representative's website – in this case www.patrickmurphy.house.gov -- and look for a "Contact Me" button, click on it. You'll find a form to fill out. Congressional staffers say the following things are important to making your message influential: including your name, address, and ZIP code so the staff can verify you are a constituent of the Member of Congress, referencing specific legislation by bill number and title -- this would be HR 3382, the HIRE Act of 2009 --, talking about the impact of the bill on the district or state, and your own reason for supporting the bill. While 90 percent of Congressional staff thought these items were helpful, less than 68 percent of staff thought personal stories were helpful. One well-respected organization recommends being: **personalized, short, targeted, and informative**. Writing a letter is not the best way to get your voice heard. Try email.

One final note about Energy Efficiency: Have you had an Energy Audit of your home yet? KeystoneHelp is still giving great loans to get the efficiency work done, there are still the Energy Star Federal deductions and now potentially the HIRE Act to help you afford the work. You will probably save a lot of money on your heating and cooling bills. We have air sealed and insulated a number of houses recently, in some cases reducing infiltration by 50%. Contact me at tom@tgw-constuction.com
