



Legislative Resource

The Architect as a **Legislative Resource**

How Can The
American Institute
of Architects and
its Member
Architects Assist
Policymakers?



A r c h i t e c t s

are much more than mere designers. They are — through education and professional training — problem-solvers, perceptive listeners, and creative thinkers who can devise strategies and find solutions to complex problems.

For policymakers, architects are an untapped yet extraordinarily valuable resource. As professionals who are intimately involved with many of today’s most relevant public policy issues, architects can provide insight, analysis, and opinions on a wide range of topics important to your constituents.

With 300 state and local chapters and nearly 68,000 members around the country who have the expertise and background to provide such expert commentary, The American Institute of Architects (AIA) should be at the top of your “must-call” list.

Inside are some examples of issues that the AIA and its member architects have successfully helped states and communities address.

Livable Communities/Urban Revitalization

Sprawl. Urban Renewal. Livability. These are themes that resonate with all Americans today, and architects are at the forefront of these issues. How does smart design and development promote improved quality of life in our communities? Is there an approach that helps encourage economic vitality, preserve open space and historic structures, and maintain a natural environment?

Taxes on Business and Professions

Architects are small businesspersons who play a vital role in states' economies. Because most firms operate with small margins of profit, tax increases can have a significant impact on architecture firms—especially those targeted only at professionals.

Building Codes and Standards

The diversity of building codes and standards from state to state adds increased costs to design and construction. Now, the major codes and standards setting organizations are combining their efforts to bring commonality to this process and develop the International Building Code and related codes. How will the international building and related codes affect your state and community? What unique state and local conditions exist that may need to be addressed in this process?

Americans with Disabilities Act/Accessibility Guidelines

The ADA continues to be a lightning rod for discussion, as are accessibility issues in general. AIA member architects—early proponents of the ADA who endorsed its passage—remain at the forefront of regulatory and accessibility issues. Now, the AIA is proposing that certain reasonable standards be applied to the ADA, to bring uniformity in its application and broaden accessibility for everyone.

Procurement and Project Delivery

Federal law and many state laws require that governments procure architecture services using a qualifications-based selection method. Why is this process important in ensuring the wise use of public dollars on design projects? How will design-build and construction management influence the delivery of government building projects?

Natural Disaster Preparedness/Response

With its Disaster Assistance Teams, which offer free services to communities struck by a disaster, the AIA is helping communities rebuild in a way that prevents future problems. How can design help prevent damage from disasters and subsequent costs to state taxpayers? How can communities rebuild disaster areas to prevent future calamities? How do architects design homes, buildings, and facilities that are safe during natural disasters? What role do building codes and design standards play in disaster preparedness?

Tort Reform and Professional Liability

Frivolous claims against design professionals increase the costs of services to the public and to the government. How can statutes of limitation and repose, certificates of merit, and other responsible liability measures protect against unwarranted suits and still ensure public safety?

Schools/Educational Facilities

New school construction and modernization of existing schools is at the top of many states' infrastructure goals. How can school design create an environment appropriate for learning? With security becoming a high priority issue, how can design create schools that are safe and attractive? When teachers, administrators, parents, and students all have different yet valid opinions on how a school should look and feel, who can we turn to for an objective, well-thought-out strategy?

Affordable Housing Issues

As the costs of housing rise in America, how can we build affordable housing that is safe and attractive? The cost for government to maintain public housing is also on the rise. How can architects help control costs through good design?

Professional Regulation and Licensing

State regulation of design and construction professionals impacts public health, safety, and welfare in the built environment. How does continuing professional competence impact a profession's ability to protect the public? What is the most appropriate profession to design build-ings and structures? How can reciprocity standards affect the ability of a state's professionals to work in other parts of the nation?

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