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Reasons Not to Employ Stock School Plans

Vote “NO” on the Doumit Stock Plan Amendment

BACKGROUND

Senator Mark Doumit has indicated that he will offer an amendment to SSB 5509 that would authorize the creation of a set of stock or model school plans for Washington Schools. The idea is that stock plans would save time and money in the construction of schools. Unfortunately, research on the subject indicates that not only do stock plans not save money; they can significantly increase liability costs and have other negative impacts.

In 2002, the State of Virginia Department of Education conducted a study on the use of stock plans and concluded that, “the preponderance of evidence would indicate there would not be any savings.”

REASONS STOCK SCHOOL PLANS DO NOT WORK

- 1. No savings to the local school districts or the state.**
For most buildings, design costs average 3 percent of the total project cost. Stock plans must be heavily modified in order to fit a specific site. *Agencies and school districts would spend more money on consultants and change orders than they would on an original design.*
- 2. Greater liability risk.**
School districts or the state would have to indemnify the original plan architect from liability, since his plans would be changed before being implemented. Similarly, an architect hired to modify the plans could not be liable for the original architect’s work. Thus the district, the state or the contractor would carry full liability for the project. *Insurance companies contend that the use of stock plans may result in poorly adapted designs resulting in an increase in litigation and higher insurance premiums.*
- 3. Stock plans must be significantly modified to fit the school site.**
Washington is geographically and geologically diverse. Every site is unique and specific site conditions must be considered such as grading, traffic flow, storm water control, sewage, utilities, etc. Failure to consider major site conditions can increase the overall cost of construction due to inevitable change orders required to adapt the plan to unique site conditions. *With each change in the plan, costs will be increased.*
- 4. Limited shelf life & changing code requirements.**
Revisions to the building code, the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA), fire code, energy code, etc., are made frequently. Every stock plan would have to be regularly modified to keep up with such changes. *Code officials will not accept drawings previously produced and stamped for use on other sites. By law, all documents must be prepared/modified, signed and sealed for each project and for each site by licensed Architects and Engineers. The costs to keep stock plans current and up to date will negate any savings associated with their use.*
- 5. Removes local control of design decisions - Different schools have different needs.**
School districts have traditionally hired architects based upon their qualifications, performance and abilities. School districts should not be denied the choice of how, when and where they spend their money. Local solutions cannot be implemented on a statewide basis. *Each school has different academic, athletic and community goals and needs. Stock plans remove the opportunity for local input to address local needs.*
- 6. Stock plans create obsolete schools that use outdated materials and old technology.**
By using stock plans, local school districts are precluded from the use of new and improved products. Architects strive to remain on the cutting edge of construction technology. Knowledge of advanced construction techniques allow architects to provide plans which improve efficiency and lower maintenance costs. Stock plans would quickly become obsolete because of changes in building materials, technology and construction methodology. Changes needed to bring stock plans up to date would be expensive and negate estimated savings.

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