



AIA Washington

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A Council of The American Institute of Architects

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Priority Issues for 2006

(** Architect talking points only. Do not give to your legislators.)

Modernize & Protect Effective Architecture Licensing Laws

- Architecture licensing laws protect the public by ensuring that buildings are properly designed.
- Architects undergo rigorous education, training and testing to demonstrate competence to protect the public health and safety.
- *The architecture law was last updated in 1985. It is time to align the law with modern practice.*
- In 2007, the architects, landscape architects, engineers and surveyors will bring forward a package of bills to update their design professions' licensing laws.
- Other groups are seeking to legislate themselves into the architectural practice.
- A group of building designers is proposing to create a new license that would allow them to practice architecture without the qualifications. Such a law is unnecessary and would put the public at risk by allowing unqualified persons to practice architecture.

Support Affordable Housing Incentives

- Affordable housing is becoming more difficult for families to find in Washington State.
- AIA/WA supports a combination of tax incentives, new state funding and consolidation of existing programs and new local incentives to promote development of affordable housing.

Support HB 1742 — Expands Tax Incentives for Multifamily Housing

- This bill lowers the population threshold from 30,000 to 5,000 for cities to qualify for use of tax incentives for multifamily housing.
- This is a proven program that is needed in our smaller communities.

Support HB 2984 — Authorizes Local Affordable Housing Incentive Programs

- Allows local governments to develop new incentives and mandates for affordable housing under the Growth Management Act.
- Incentives can include: density bonuses, height bonuses, fee waivers or exemptions, parking reductions, or expedited permitting, conditioned on the provision of low-income housing units.
- Establishes standards to ensure that incentives result in the development of more affordable housing.

Support School Construction

- The quality of education offered by a district is directly affected by the quality of permanent facilities available to the district.
- Efficiency and quality in school design and construction are important goals. The Council supports adequate state assistance for funding for school construction and maintenance.

Support HJR 4205 — Simple Majority for School Operations & Maintenance Levies

- Puts before the voters a Constitutional amendment to allow school maintenance and operations levies to pass by a simple majority (50% plus one).
- Let the voters determine if the school levy vote margin requirement should be lowered.

Support Redevelopment of Brownfields

- Redevelopment of brownfields turns once contaminated and unproductive properties into economically viable sites that attract economic and community development.
- Brownfields reuse can increase the local tax base, create jobs, revitalize neighborhoods, and extend environmental protection.
- Brownfield development lessens demand to develop green spaces and relieves urban sprawl.
- The EPA has given grants to clean up 238 brownfields sites in Washington State. Thousands more brownfield sites exist in Washington.

Support SB 6327 — Washington Economic Development Finance Authority

- The Local Economic Development Project Financing Account is created to issue bonds to finance the clean up and redevelopment of brownfield sites.
- The bonds are dedicated solely for brownfields cleanup and the funds are given to local governments based on agreements signed to clean and redevelop these sites.
- Properties must be cleaned up to the standards of the Model Toxics Control Act.

Support SB 6781 — Tax Exemptions for Environmental Remediation Services

- Exempts from the retail sales tax the labor and services associated with environmental remediation.
- Lowers the Business & Occupations Tax rate for providing environmental remediation services.

Promote Water Conservation and Reuse

- Across Washington State the lack of available water is hampering growth and slowing economic development.
- Cities and counties in all areas of the state are running out of water rights, limiting their ability to accommodate more housing, businesses and industry.

Support HB 2884 — Creates New Rules to Promote the Use of Reclaimed Water

- Reclaimed water is an effluent derived from a wastewater treatment system that has been treated to be suitable for a beneficial use or a controlled use that otherwise would not occur.
- The use of reclaimed water can expand existing water supplies and improve the health of our state's lakes, rivers and aquifers. If put directly into rivers and streams, treated water can warm waterways and hurt fish habitats. The beneficial use of reclaimed water filters it through natural systems prior to reintroduction in the groundwater.
- Requires the Department of Ecology in coordination with the Department of Health to develop rules for the use of reclaimed water by 2010.

Support Rainwater Catchment Systems

- State law on the use of rainwater catchment systems is unclear. Even so, hundreds of such systems have been installed, saving millions of gallons of water each year.
- The use of captured rainwater decreases the demand for treated water and lessens the demands on water from rivers, lakes and aquifers.
- AIA/WA supports changing state law to exempt rainwater catchment systems from the need for a "water right permit."
- *AIA/WA is working with a broad group of stakeholders to develop legislation for 2007.*



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Support Effective Architecture Licensing Laws

BACKGROUND

The practice of architecture is restricted by the state to only licensed architects in order to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. Architects have unique education, training and testing to determine their competence to protect the public life and safety in the design of buildings for human use and habitation. Architects are also trained to coordinate the work of other professionals to ensure that the designs of consulting engineers, specialty engineers and the input of contractors are integrated appropriately into the final building design. Effective architecture licensure laws protect the public and provide for safer buildings.

MODERNIZE THE ARCHITECTURE LICENSING LAW

The architecture licensing law has not been updated since 1985. In that time new technologies, building codes and development regulations have changed significantly. In 1985 most architecture occurred on drafting boards. Now computer aided design is the standard. The Washington architecture law needs to be updated to reflect the modern practice of architecture.

The AIA/WA is working with the other design professions (landscape architecture, engineering and land surveying) to coordinate a package of reforms for the 2007 legislative session. These concepts will include aligning corporate practice provisions, streamlining duplicative exemptions, authorizing mandatory continuing education, coordinating “seal” requirements, and providing support for persons training to be an architect.

PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF ARCHITECTURE REGISTRATION LAWS

Only architects and engineers licensed through examination possess the necessary education, training and experience to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public in the built environment. Other persons, who are not architects, may want to practice parts of architecture without the demonstrated qualifications needed to protect the public. These persons may possess useful skills in designing within the built environment, but fragmentation of responsibility for the building design process endangers and misleads the public as to respective areas of competence and expertise. Architects should continue to have the primary responsibility for ensuring the public safety in the design of Washington’s buildings. The AIA/WA opposes allowing persons other than architects to practice aspects of architecture that impact the public health, safety and welfare.

OPPOSE “BUILDING DESIGNER” LICENSING

A group of “building designers” is circulating a draft bill that would allow them to practice architecture, but without any of the education, training or testing required of licensed architects. State law recognizes the significant threat to the public health, safety and welfare from the unlicensed practice of architecture. Creating an additional license for building designers is not only unnecessary, it would put the public at great risk by allowing unqualified persons to practice architecture.

The draft bill would allow them to practice architecture of unlimited scale without an architect. It would allow them to design high rise condominiums and other multiunit residential buildings of unlimited size and unlimited occupancy, commercial projects of unlimited size (provided they work with a contractor), and other commercial projects of up to 45,000 square feet. Their bill would allow anyone to practice such building design with as little as 2 years of experience, no formal training and no testing.

The AIA/WA urges lawmakers to reject any proposal to create a new license for building designers or other groups seeking to practice aspects of architecture.



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Affordable Housing

BACKGROUND

Affordable housing is becoming more difficult for families to find in Washington State. Washington is lagging behind the rest of the country in terms of affordability of housing and homeownership. AIA/WA supports a combination of tax incentives, new state funding and consolidation of existing programs and new local incentives to promote development of affordable housing.

SUPPORT HB 1742 — EXPANDS TAX INCENTIVES FOR MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

Current state tax laws allows certain new, rehabilitated or converted multifamily housing projects to be eligible for a 10 year property tax exemption. Cities choose whether or not to use this program. The law is designed to reduce urban sprawl and increase the availability of affordable multifamily housing units in established residential centers.

The property tax exemption may be applied only to new housing construction and the increased value of a building due to rehabilitation. The exemption does not apply to the land or the non-housing related improvements. If a property fails to maintain compliance with the program for the requisite 10 year period, cities may collect the balance of taxes that would have been paid in the absence of the program. While this program has been effective, it only applies to cities with a population of at least 30,000 or the largest city or town in a county planning under the Growth Management Act. There are only 48 towns and cities that qualify for participation in the current program.

HB 1742 lowers the population threshold from 30,000 to 5,000 for cities to qualify for use of tax incentives for multifamily housing. Reducing the cap would allow approximately another 70 cities to participate in the program. This is a proven program that is needed in our smaller communities.

SUPPORT HB 2984 — AUTHORIZES LOCAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

This important measure allows local governments to develop new incentives and mandates for affordable housing under the Growth Management Act. Incentives can include: density bonuses, height bonuses, fee waivers or exemptions, parking reductions, or expedited permitting, conditioned on the provision of low-income housing units. HB 2984 provides flexibility to cities and counties to utilize incentives and mandates that will work best for them.

HB 2984 also provides protection for developments that choose not to participate by ensuring that jurisdictions cannot condition, deny, or delay the issuance of a permit or development approval due to the absence of participation in its incentive program.

AMERICANS SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCENTIVES

On December 16-22, 2004, and again on January 3-5, 2006, two respected national pollsters — The Tarrance Group, a Republican firm, and Lake Snell and Perry, a Democratic firm — indicated that affordable housing is a salient issue among the national electorate.

The survey conducted on December 16-22, 2004, found that affordable housing is a “hot button” issue with a large chunk of the American voting population. A sizable 28 percent of the voters polled rated the importance of “increasing the availability of affordable housing” a 10—the highest possible rating—on a 0–10 scale of importance. It should also be noted that a solid majority of the electorate polled, 64 percent, rated the issue at least a 7 on the scale of importance.

On another poll question, 78 percent of voters “strongly agreed” with the statement that “Every American has the right to live in safe, decent housing they can afford.” An additional 15 percent said they “somewhat agreed” with the statement. Overall, 93 percent expressed some level of agreement. The demographics of the survey showed that at least 85 percent of every major partisan, income, racial, age, home ownership, education, and regional voter group were in agreement on this point.



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School Construction

Background

The quality of education offered by a school district is directly affected by the quality of permanent facilities available to the district. Many districts deal with inadequate housing for students because of failed bond elections, particularly in high-growth districts where portable buildings are almost a way of life.

The need for modernization and new construction for school facilities has reached a critical stage throughout the state. Schools face the enormous challenges of record high enrollments, new demands for education technology, the need for school-based before- and after-school programs, and the health and safety hazards of deteriorating facilities. The overwhelming need to improve the condition of Washington's schools and to construct new buildings to accommodate rising enrollments affects school districts throughout the state. Because of this situation, the AIA/WA supports legislation to approve school district bonds by a simple majority vote, eliminating the sixty-percent majority and the forty-percent voter turnout requirements.

Support Substitute HJR 4205 — School Construction Levies

The Washington Constitution requires a supermajority of three-fifths of voters to support school maintenance, remodeling or new construction levy before it can be passed. This extraordinary burden has left many school districts with inadequate housing for students because of failed bond elections. Several school districts have had to go back to the ballot several times to pass a levy, even though a majority of voters supported them. Because of this situation, the AIA/WA supports legislation to allow voters to approve school district bonds by a simple majority.

SHJR 4205 changes the requirement to pass a school maintenance and operations levy to a simple majority of voters and eliminates the forty-percent voter turnout requirements. Passage of these levies is vital to the upkeep of our schools. Regular maintenance of school facilities can delay the need for major renovations or new school construction, saving taxpayers millions of dollars in future construction bonds.

Americans Support School Construction Funding

In a nationwide poll of voters conducted December 16-22, 2004, (1,000 sample, margin of error +/- 3.1) by two respected national pollsters - The Tarrance Group, a Republican firm, and Lake Snell and Perry, a Democratic firm - it was found that when considering projects that government could spend tax dollars on, an overwhelming 91 percent of voters surveyed said that "repairing unsafe and dilapidated school buildings" was an important priority. Of those, a large 66 percent rated it "very important" and 25 percent "somewhat important."

On another question, 77 percent of voters polled said they agreed with the statement, "We are in urgent need of renovating existing school buildings." Moreover, a majority of the electorate polled - 51 percent - said they "strongly agreed" while 26 percent said they "somewhat agreed." High percentages of all demographic groups were in agreement on the need for renovating schools - notably, 82 percent of women and 86 percent of Hispanics were in agreement.

Additionally, the survey found that voters nationwide believe state and local governments are not doing a particularly good job when it comes to repairing dilapidated school buildings. Only 27 percent positively rate "state and local governments' ability to repair dilapidated school buildings." In fact, a whopping 11 times more voters rate them "poor" than "excellent" on this issue.



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Sustainable Development — Brownfields

BACKGROUND

The AIA Washington Council supports the wise development and use of our state's resources. In 2005, the Washington Legislature passed the High Performance Public Buildings Act, to require that state-funded buildings be designed and built to higher environmental and efficiency standards. Sustainable buildings are only one facet of sustainable development. State laws should also promote the redevelopment of previously used sites for new purposes, including brownfields and other currently contaminated sites. And, state law should promote energy, water and resource conservation in building development and operations.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors estimates there are more than 24,987 brownfields in the United States. If these were redeveloped, cities would create 575,000 new jobs and bring in an extra \$1.9 billion in tax revenue.

SUPPORT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF BROWNFIELDS

A brownfield is an abandoned, vacant or underutilized area — often a former industrial site — in which property redevelopment or reuse is complicated by a perceived environmental contamination. This contamination stymies redevelopment, harms existing communities, limits economic development and job creation, and leads to sprawl and uncontrolled growth. New incentives and funding is needed to expedite site cleanup and foster economic development of former industrial properties.

Funding support from state and local government can encourage businesses to redevelop industrial areas, revitalize communities and create local jobs. Brownfield development also lessens demand to develop green spaces and relieves urban sprawl.

SUPPORT SB 6327 — WASHINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY

SB 6327 creates the Local Economic Development Project Financing Account to issue bonds to finance the clean up and redevelopment of brownfield sites. The bonds are dedicated solely for brownfields cleanup and the funds are given to local governments based on agreements signed to clean and redevelop these sites. Properties must be cleaned up to the standards of the Model Toxics Control Act.

SUPPORT SB 6781 — TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION SERVICES

SB 6781 exempts from the retail sales tax the labor and services associated with environmental remediation. It also lowers the Business & Occupations Tax rate for businesses that provide environmental remediation services.

AMERICANS SUPPORT BROWNFIELDS REDEVELOPMENT

In a nationwide poll of voters (1,000 sample, margin of error +/- 3.1) conducted in December 2004, by two respected national pollsters — The Tarrance Group, a Republican firm, and Lake Snell and Perry, a Democratic firm— 68 percent of voters indicated that “Cleaning up contaminated areas caused by pollution so they can be used for environmentally safe new development” was, among a series of projects that the government could spend tax dollars on, a “very important” priority.

Interestingly, voters in rural, suburban, and urban areas all rated the issue of equal importance, as did all age groups. Also, 80 percent of Hispanics rated the issue “very important,” while 70 percent of all women and 75 percent of non-college-educated men did as well.

In addition to those who rated the issue “very important,” 27 percent rated it “somewhat important.” That means an overwhelming 95 percent of the electorate believes cleaning up and redeveloping contaminated sites is an important priority in the expenditure of their tax dollars.



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Sustainable Development — Water Conservation

Background

The AIA Washington Council supports the wise development and use of our state's resources. In 2005, the Washington Legislature passed the High Performance Public Buildings Act, to require that state-funded buildings be designed and built to higher environmental and efficiency standards. Sustainable buildings are only one facet of sustainable development. State laws should also promote the redevelopment of previously used sites for new purposes, including brownfields and other currently contaminated sites. And, state law should promote energy, water and resource conservation in building development and operations.

Across Washington State the lack of available water is hampering growth and slowing economic development. Cities and counties in all areas of the state are running out of water rights, limiting their ability to accommodate more housing, businesses and industry. The use of reclaimed water and captured rainwater can supplement existing water supplies to support more development while protecting our environment and conserving natural resources.

Support HB 2884 — Establishes New Rules for the Use of Reclaimed Water

Reclaimed water is an effluent derived from a wastewater treatment system that has been treated to be suitable for a beneficial use or a controlled use that otherwise would not occur. The use of reclaimed water can expand existing water supplies and improve the health of our state's lakes, rivers and aquifers. If put directly into rivers and streams, treated water can warm waterways and hurt fish habitats. The beneficial use of reclaimed water filters it through natural systems prior to reintroduction in the groundwater.

HB 2884 requires the Department of Ecology in coordination with the Department of Health to develop rules for the use of reclaimed water by 2010.

Support the use of Rainwater Catchment Systems

Runoff, or non-point source, pollution is caused by rainwater taking with it pollutants from roads, rooftops, and other impervious surfaces. The pollutants are not filtered out naturally, so they flow into surface water. Impervious surfaces also prevent rainwater from sinking into the soil to replenish the groundwater supply and create a greater volume of runoff at a more rapid pace than under natural conditions. This may result in a higher frequency of flooding and erosion, which contributes to more runoff. All these factors increase pollutants in our waterways and water supply.

Rainwater catchment systems capture rainwater and stormwater runoff and reuse it on a building site. This capturing prevents runoff that can cause erosion, flooding and overtax combined sewer systems and water treatment systems. Water captured is put back into the water treatment system or naturally filtered onsite overtime. Rainwater harvesting can also reduce the need to draw water for treatment from rivers, lakes, aquifers and other sources.

State law on the use of rainwater catchment systems is unclear. Even so, hundreds of such systems have been installed, saving millions of gallons of water each year. The use of captured rainwater decreases the demand for treated water and lessens the demands on water from rivers, lakes and aquifers. AIA/WA supports changing state law to specifically exempt rainwater catchment systems from the need for a "water right" permit.

AIA/WA is working with a broad group of stakeholders to develop legislation for 2007.