



AIA Washington

724 Columbia St NW Suite 120
Olympia WA 98501-1291
www.aiawa.org
wacouncil@aiawa.org

A Council of The American Institute of Architects

(360) 943-6012
1-800-722-0394
FAX (360) 352-1870

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.