



# Policy Platform 2020—The American Institute of Architects

## Frequently Asked Questions

### General Questions

#### **Why did AIA develop the Architects Platform?**

As you may know, this is the first year that AIA National has provided such a policy platform to the major presidential candidates, Capitol Hill, and the wider public. AIA developed the Platform to publicly state the issues the Institute prioritizes and plans to advocate with the Administration.

#### **How did AIA develop the Architects Platform?**

Drafting the Architects Platform has been a collaborative effort at AIA. A diverse subgroup of members compiled by AIA's Government Affairs Committee (GAC) developed the outline of the Platform, in coordination with AIA staff. CACE executives and multiple knowledge communities, including HCD, SLG, COTE, and CAE, were consulted. AIA leadership have also provided input throughout the Platform development process.

### **How did AIA decide what issues to include in the Architects Platform?**

The Architects Platform includes the policies that the organization had already identified as priorities through the biannual process of the AIA's Government Affairs Committee (GAC). This prioritization exercise uses member survey input and is confirmed by the AIA Board of Directors. Additionally, the Platform drafting process was a collaborative effort that included input from AIA's Government Affairs Committee, CACE executives, multiple knowledge communities, including HCD, SLG, COTE, and CAE, as well as AIA staff and leadership.

### **Has AIA shared this resource with others?**

Yes, AIA staff has shared the Platform with the Republican National Committee (RNC) and Democratic National Committee (DNC) in advance of their presidential policy platform committee meetings so that AIA's priorities are understood prior to each party's platform deliberation. AIA will also share the Platform with the full AIA membership, the CACE Executive Directors, and every Congressional office.

### **Is AIA endorsing a candidate in the U.S. Presidential Election?**

No. AIA does not endorse presidential candidates. (Or any candidate for that matter)

### **Can I share this with others?**

Yes.

## **Does AIA have a political action committee?**

Yes, ArchiPAC is AIA's political action committee working on behalf of architects and the profession. Please reach out to Davon Gray, Sr. Director, Political Affairs (davongray@aia.org) or Wendy Young, Sr. Manager, Political Affairs (wendyperezyoung@aia.org) for additional information.

## **Does AIA give contributions to [insert candidate name]**

AIA does not contribute to candidates; however, AIA's political action committee, ArchiPAC, does contribute to candidates.

- You may look up ArchiPAC candidate contributions on the AIA's ArchiPAC website (<http://archipac.org/>)
  - Once you log into the website, click on the grey header titled "Candidate Support" to search for ArchiPAC's contributions from 2018 – 2020.
- [If yes, explain] ArchiPAC contributes to federal candidates who support our issue priorities. ArchiPAC's candidate contributions are reviewed and approved by the ArchiPAC Steering Committee, an AIA committee consisting of AIA members. ArchiPAC engages policymakers in a bipartisan fashion and works to develop relationships on both sides of the aisle

## **Why are AIA's policies so liberal/ so conservative?**

AIA engages appointed and elected officials in a bipartisan manner, working with both political parties and Independents to advance the profession. The priorities included in the Architects Platform were compiled collaboratively with AIA-members, the AIA Government Affairs Committee, CACE executives, multiple AIA-Knowledge Communities, as well as AIA staff and leadership. AIA endorses and supports policies and legislation that supports

architects and promotes the health, safety, and welfare of the clients and the public they serve, regardless of party affiliation.

- Many of the policy ideas in the Architects Policy Platform are based on bipartisan legislation. See additional sheet for more details.

### **Why should architects get involved in politics? Won't that hurt my business interests?**

Architects need to be at the negotiating table to help shape as important issues as they are debated. Otherwise, AIA members and architects will be left out of important federal decisions that affect the architecture profession and the built environment. One of the most effective ways to ensure that architectural business interests are considered is by maintaining constructive and ongoing relationships with legislators that can be leveraged when legislative issues important to architects arise.

- As an example, during the Congressional negotiations for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA), AIA, thanks to intense lobbying by our members, [solidified Congressional support](#) to explicitly include architects and engineers as eligible professionals able to utilize a new 20 percent deduction for pass-through (S-Corp) businesses. It is worth noting that the initial House and Senate versions of the TCJA prevented architects from taking advantage of this provision. Only after a coordinated federal engagement campaign did the language of the legislation change to architects' business benefit.

### **Why are my membership dues funding political campaigns?**

Membership dues are never used for political contributions. Only funds provided voluntarily by AIA-members specifically to AIA's political action committee, ArchiPAC, are used for political contributions.

### **Why are my membership dues funding lobbyists?**

Government advocacy has been an issue highlighted by AIA-membership as a priority for the Institute. Federal lobbying is one component of AIA's advocacy structure aimed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public and building occupants. As such, AIA employs in-house federal lobbyists, among other government affairs staff, to work exclusively on issues paramount to AIA members.

### **How does AIA decide which issues it will lobby on?**

AIA's federal relations team lobbies Capitol Hill on issues that are paramount to the architecture profession and the health, safety and welfare of the public and building occupants. The issues defined as priorities for the Institute are determined by the Government Affairs Committee (GAC), with member survey input, and are approved by the Board of Directors.

## **A Future Economy Section**

### **Is architecture considered a STEM profession on the federal level?**

Yes, Architecture is technically included among the federal STEM categories, but it is nested under the "E" for engineering. While this allows architecture to qualify for some federal STEM-specific funding (including Career and Technical Education grants), we

believe that not having Architecture as a unique STEAM category causes confusion and leaves architecture out of some STEM funding opportunities.

### **What sort of workforce training is the AIA advocating for?**

AIA is advocating for a university-based Building Training and Assessment Center for architects (and other professionals) to utilize best practices in energy-efficient design and technology.

- AIA also supports the reauthorization of the Workforce, Innovation and Opportunity Act, which will expire this year.

### **Does AIA support total student debt forgiveness?**

AIA has not taken a position on total student debt forgiveness. AIA has historically supported student loan forgiveness tied to providing architectural services for the public good. Additionally, AIA has endorsed legislation that would provide employers the ability to count recent graduates' student loan payments as the matching contribution to their employer retirement savings plans, like a 401(k). This legislation would help provide an answer to the often-difficult decision of debt-burdened young professionals from having to decide to either pay their student loans or save for retirement. The idea is to do both - provide a path to student loan-burdened graduates to both pay-down their student loan payments while also developing an important 'nest egg' of retirement savings to set up for future success. This specific legislation, the Retirement Parity for Student Loans Act, was lobbied on directly by AIAS representatives in July 2019 on Capitol Hill.

### **What would the Civil Service Corps entail?**

There are various proposals circulating through Congress to create a similar-minded Civil Service Corps. AIA supports the creation of such a Corp, managed by the federal government, where recent graduates can provide their time and resources for public projects and receive student loan forgiveness.

### **What tax incentives does AIA advocate for as it relates to resilience, sustainability, and equitable development?**

AIA advocates for the federal government to fully fund and expand the 179D Energy Efficient Commercial Buildings Deduction, 25C Non-Business Energy Property Tax Credit, and 45L New Energy Efficient Home Credit.

### **Are research & development tax credits eligible for architects?**

Yes. However, completing R&D applications is a fact-intensive process. We always recommend firms that are considering applying for the R&D tax credit to discuss with their general counsel or legal expert for advice.

## **Climate Action Section**

### **Has AIA taken a position in response to the recent protests around social equity?**

Yes. AIA released a full statement in June, available here (6/4/2020)

### **Does AIA support a federal mandate on using only certain building materials?**

No.

### **What defines building electrification?**

Building electrification refers to the shift in electricity use for buildings away from fossil fuels and towards zero-carbon emission sources, such as wind or solar energy production.

### **How would the federal government incentivize the adoption of net zero carbon energy codes?**

The AIA recommends that the federal government hasten the adoption of the code through significant monetary incentives, training, and technical assistance. AIA also recommends that the federal government provide additional incentives for localities to adopt voluntary stretch codes related to energy efficiency.

## Healthy Communities Section

### **What is the state of homelessness in the U.S.?**

According to HUD's 2018 Point-In-Time Report, over 550,000 people were experiencing homelessness on a given single night in 2018, which is approximately 17 out of every 10,000 U.S. citizens.

- Approximately 65% stayed in sheltered locations, while 35% stayed in unsheltered locations
- While accounting for 13% of the U.S. population, African Americans account for 40% of all people experiencing homelessness and 51% of people experiencing homelessness as members of families with children.

### **What is the state of affordable housing in the U.S.?**

An estimated 12 million U.S. renter and homeowner households now pay more than 50% of their annual incomes on housing, which is substantially higher than the 30% threshold designated by HUD as cost burdening and may lead to difficulty for families to afford necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.

### **What sort of toxins does AIA recommend the federal government to address?**

Lead paint abatement, asbestos abatement, and restrictions on other hazardous materials. AIA is committed to health, safety, and welfare, first and foremost.

## **What sort of supportive services does AIA recommend for the federal government to support?**

AIA urges the federal government to support supportive housing measures for existing and newly constructed affordable housing communities. This would provide services that aid with a diverse range of disabilities, chronic illnesses, mental health issues, and substance use disorders, among others, to address serious challenges to stable housing. Supportive housing is also often paired with social services such as job training, skills training, substance abuse treatment, community support services and case management services, along with other valuable assistance, thus compounding the supportive effects of services that keep at-risk individuals and families out of homelessness and onto a path of long-term, unassisted housing.

## **Does AIA support armed guards within schools?**

AIA has not taken a position on armed guards on school property. AIA has advocated for the creation of a Federal Clearinghouse on School Safety Design, which was created in 2019. AIA has provided resources to the Clearinghouse for school districts of all sizes, locations, and funding resources to utilize.

## **Where can I find best practices for school design?**

Individuals can provide additional guidance to the Clearinghouse and view existing resources on the Clearinghouse's website:

<https://www.schoolsafety.gov/>

- [Link to CAE's own report from the summit in October 2018](#)