

Step-by-Step Talking Points: When Meeting With Members of Congress and Staffs

During the first two weeks of April, members of Congress will be in their home districts for Easter recess. This is a perfect opportunity for components and AIA members to meet with their representatives to discuss issues important to architects and their communities.

Congress is currently working a number of major legislative initiatives that will impact architects and the profession. Over the course of the year, Congress will attempt to pass comprehensive health care reform, a massive surface transportation bill, an economy-wide cap-and-trade program to limit greenhouse gas emissions, and possibly another energy bill. The AIA has a stake in all of these issues. Therefore all AIA members are encouraged to meet with their elected representatives during the spring recess to inform them of the initiatives critical to the AIA and its members.

Here are the *four messages* we need to you to deliver to your members of Congress:

A. About the AIA

- Express thanks.
- The AIA and its more than 85,000 members are committed to serving the public, both as designers of the built environment and as advocates for policies that help create stronger, healthier, and more sustainable communities. That's happening both in your district/state as well as nationwide.
- The architecture profession is a key component of the overall economy. The design and construction industries are responsible for one in ten dollars of US GDP; the architecture profession employs more than a quarter of a million Americans.
- Architects are serious about becoming a greater resource on governmental issues that impact the built environment, providing both grassroots support and technical expertise, to members of Congress. Architects are community builders and want to help provide elected officials with information on these matters.

B. The Issues

Green Affordable Housing: Congressman Ed Perlmutter (D-CO) will soon introduce legislation that will stimulate the design and construction of energy-efficient residential buildings. *The Green Resources for Energy-Efficient Neighborhoods (GREEN) Act* (no bill number yet) will provide incentives to lenders and financial institutions to offer lower interest loans and other benefits to consumers who build, buy, or remodel their homes to make them more energy efficient.

- Hand the Member of Congress/staff member the "Expand Energy Efficient Housing" issue brief
- Briefly discuss the bill's key points, namely:

- The bill would require new and renovated public housing projects (Section 8, FHA, Hope VI, etc./or projects built using HUD funding) to meet more stringent energy-efficiency requirements
- The bill will promote the use of energy-efficient and location-efficient mortgages
- The bill will help state and local housing agencies in making their buildings more energy efficient
- Ask the member to support The GREEN Act

Transportation and Community Planning: The AIA supports funding for community planning that fosters economic development, congestion relief, sustainability, and livable and walkable communities. The upcoming debates on transportation funding and on climate change policy provide opportunities to help communities plan more sustainable futures.

- Describe how planning and design processes, including charrettes and design assistance teams, help communities plan transportation and land-use plans that foster economic development, sustainability, and walkable communities
- Describe examples community planning processes that led to the design of livable communities or development linked to transportation in your district/state.
- Ask the member to **support** legislation, including CLEAN TEA (S. 575/H.R. 1329), to help communities create a more efficient transportation system and reduced greenhouse gas emissions through planning strategies that would foster expanded transit and passenger rail; development around transit stops; and safer, more vibrant neighborhoods.

Health-Care Reform: Congress will attempt to pass comprehensive health-care reform later this year. The specific plans are still in the works but you can use this opportunity to remind your legislators that health care is a critical issue and it must be addressed.

- Please share stories about how health-care costs are affecting you, your business, your firm, and your family personally.
- Offer the AIA's assistance as your legislators work to address health-care reform.

C. Goodbye/Follow-up

- Regardless of their response on any issue, *thank them* for their time and willingness to listen. Tell them we look forward to *building a strong relationship* with them and their office. Please make sure you ask them to **call the AIA Government Advocacy staff whenever they need anything (number and e-mail are on the issue briefs.)**