You may have heard that ACEC Indiana secured a $60,000 grant from ACEC’s National Minuteman Fund to help defray the advocacy costs of pursuing legislation in the 2019 Indiana General Assembly for water-related infrastructure funding. The Minuteman Fund was established to provide assistance to ACEC state member organizations on issues of national significance.

These funds will help ACEC Indiana pursue legislation that would provide new sources of revenue for “water-related” infrastructure capital projects, specifically drinking water, waste water, and storm water systems. Legislative goals also include examination and consideration of new standards of these systems and potentially widespread reorganization of many into a collaborative approach for greater efficiency across the state of Indiana.

We are gearing up for the 2019 Indiana General Assembly and want to inform all member firms of the “rest of the story” so that our “grassroots” advocacy is ready for action!

**Background:** Since 2003, ACEC Indiana has urged lawmakers to examine the funding needs of “water-related” infrastructure, starting with a study published by Indiana University’s Center for Urban Policy and the Environment. That year, the study found that the funding needs were at least $12.4B to $13.9B (not adjusted for inflation) for the period 2000-2020 for drinking and waste water projects. The report was refreshed in 2017, and now shows needs range between $15.6B to $17.5B, with a funding gap of at least $8.5B over the next 20 years. ACEC Indiana also helped fund a study in 2014 to examine the nexus between water and economic development (i.e. water quantity), “Modernizing The State’s Approach To A Critical Resource” that called for lawmakers to craft a comprehensive water plan. Throughout this period, ACEC Indiana has relentlessly educated state and local leaders on the water infrastructure needs, consistently including the issue in its lobbying effort.

To strengthen our effort, ACEC Indiana hired APPIAN, a highly-respected lobbying firm, in 2017 to assist our advocacy team; the firm served as the chief lobbyists on the highway/road funding which was a similar, sizable scope of work. Initially, we focused on building a coalition as well as working with key legislative “champions” of the built environment to introduce a bill that would serve as platform to examine “water-related infrastructure” on the whole.

All those years of educating lawmakers worked out; the General Assembly grasped the magnitude of the looming crisis, and passed a bill (House Enrolled Act 1267) that established the “Water Infrastructure Task Force” that met over this summer and fall, with the intent to develop legislation for the 2019 session, a “budget session.” Therefore, we abandoned the coalition-building effort that we thought would be needed to get this bill passed, as the “players” came together naturally through the legislative process.

**What’s Happening Now:** The Water Infrastructure Task Force consists of four legislators and seven lay people appointed by Governor Holcomb, two of which are ACEC Indiana members (Chris Gale, HNTB, current ACEC Board member, and Marty Wessler, Wessler Engineering, ACEC Past President.) ACEC Indiana has been integrally involved with the Task Force as an “expert resource” to ensure a comprehensive and methodical examination occurs of water quality and quantity for public health and safety, as well as economic development opportunity based on data. Findings and recommendations for legislative action are expected to be published soon! You can digest the information presented to the Task Force now, as well as the report when it is published at [http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2018/committees/water_infrastructure_task_force](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2018/committees/water_infrastructure_task_force).

ACEC Indiana will need the help of our “grassroots” throughout the 2019 General Assembly so look for future “Calls to Action!”

**Promoting Diversity and Inclusion**

More than 170 diverse business leaders, prime consultants, clients, and special guests gathered recently to network and hear from Blair Milo, Secretary for Career Connections & Talent, about promotion diversity within the workplace and developing diversity in the engineering workforce pipeline.

The event, hosted by ACEC Indiana’s Diversity Committee, continues to grow in its 13th year. As a continued effort to promote diversity and inclusion beyond those in attendance at the event, attendees were asked to promote connections made via a social media challenge exceeding 3,000 impressions.

According to a post-event survey, more than 50 percent of attendees remarked that they made new connections at the event while others saw familiar faces and followed up with prior contacts. All responders would encourage others to attend in 2019!

The Diversity Committee strives to continue the diversity dialogue throughout the year. If you have suggestions of clients to engage at next year’s fair or other events, please reach out to ACEC Indiana at staff@acecindiana.org.

Click here to view all event photos!
Walker & Associates Insurance is excited to announce its merger with Hughes Insurance Group forming Walker-Hughes Insurance. President Doug Walker commented that “In order to stay relevant in an evolving marketplace, insurance agencies are going to have to invest in technology and in good quality people that are adaptable to the dynamic needs of our customers.”

Walker & Associates Insurance has always provided a wide variety of insurance products from Auto, Home and Life to Commercial products including Professional Liability Insurance, with which ACEC members are already familiar. With the formation of WalkerHughes Insurance the company has expanded its footprint to 12 locations throughout the state of Indiana and have deepened our bench with over 90 Insurance specialists.

The merger has also resulted in the expansion of the benefits team through the introduction of WalkerHughes Benefits. With over 100 years of combined experience providing Group Health insurance, WalkerHughes Benefits is equipped to serve firms of all sizes from the growing two-person firm to the established national firms. WalkerHughes Benefits will continue to work with the ACEC Life and Health trust to deliver the ACEC Health and Wellness program through United Healthcare, an exclusive program for ACEC members. WalkerHughes Benefits Director, Kevin Mandrell (k.mandrell@walkerhughes.com), is “excited to continue to serve ACEC firms throughout the Midwest with the expansion and expertise of his team.”

Holly Gill-Gaither and Kristen Walker will continue to serve their current firms and valued relationships. WalkerHughes will also remain the Select Broker representing the ACEC Business Insurance Trust in the administration of the Property & Casualty Insurance program exclusive to ACEC members. “We are excited to provide our firms the confidence in other areas of their insurance portfolio. Through the formation of WalkerHughes Benefits, the addition of our new Workers Compensation specialist and additional Cyber Liability experts, our firms can find a total insurance solution with WalkerHughes Insurance,” comments Kristen Walker.

For additional questions and comments please don’t hesitate to reach out to Kristen Walker (k.walker@walkerhughes.com) or Holly Gill-Gaither (h.gillgaither@walkerhughes.com).