Mid-point of this “short” legislative session occurred Feb. 5th and bills of significant concern/opposition by ACEC Indiana are either not moving, or have been improved to the point of acceptable/no harm to member firms. On the other hand, interest in storm water “needs” seems tepid in the General Assembly so we continue to push for ongoing study of it statewide in anticipation of the 2021 “budget” session. On Monday, February 10th, bills that passed out of the House will switch to the Senate, and vice versa. ACEC Indiana’s bill tracking list has shortened considerably, and below is a snap shot of a few key topics.

Pipe Materials Mandates and Prohibition of Local Building Standards: These bills contained a similar theme, that is, to override the judgement of design professionals to select appropriate materials for projects, working in conjunction with their clients/locals. Both have failed to advance, having died in committee due to strong opposition from a coalition of ACEC Indiana, AIA Indiana, local government groups, and more. Unfortunately, these concepts will likely return next year so all members are strongly encouraged to inform your legislators about your professional duty to protect public health and safety, and the need to be able to work with your clients to meet their needs to deliver projects with long term value. (SB 55 Pipe Materials Mandate, authored by Senator Doriot, R-Syracuse; HB 1060 Building Standards Prohibition, authored by Rep. Miller, R-Elkhart.)

Licensing: Both chambers have high interest to attract professionals from other states to move here and have their occupational or professional licenses immediately recognized; a worthy goal to help offset workforce shortages. However, the bills as introduced concerned ACEC Indiana for a few reasons: lower standards for education/testing/work experience; residency requirements; interference with existing licensing processes that have been streamlined. As a result, both bills that are advancing have been amended to ACEC Indiana’s satisfaction so that it won’t impair the existing system used the P.E. Board, as well as Surveyors and Architects Boards. (HB 1008 License Endorsement, authored by Rep. Carbaugh, R-Ft. Wayne; SB 427 Provisional Licensing, authored by Sen. Buchanan, R-Lebanon.)

Storm Water Fee Exemptions: SB 46 authored by Sen. Freeman, R-Indy, originally exempted churches and schools from paying storm water fees, which is obviously detrimental to these systems. The bill lacked support in committee, so fortunately it was amended, turning it into a study committee on Storm Water fees. As a result, ACEC Indiana will encourage legislators to use this bill as vehicle to resume the evaluation of storm water needs as recommended by the Storm Water Task Force that met during the summer, but still has some unfinished business.

Thank you to the many ACEC Indiana members who testified on bills, contacted legislators and provided essential guidance to our lobby team, offering that “real world experience”…it is making a vital difference!