What does AIA Stand For?

Now more than ever, the collective voice of architects is essential for designing a better future for our country and planet. Even in times of change, AIA’s values remain constant. We are at the table with policymakers who are committed to a better built environment and a prosperous architecture profession. But we will not hesitate to call out those whose values we oppose.

Today our nation faces unprecedented challenges: the impacts of a changing climate on our communities and critical infrastructure that is deteriorating from neglect. We need policymakers to put politics aside and get to work. No more delay—it is time to act.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) works to advance our nation’s quality of life and protect the public’s health, safety and welfare, as it has done for 160 years.

Each day AIA members across the country and throughout the world create the places where people live and learn, work, and play. We design hospitals that heal us and houses of worship that sustain us. We create next generation energy-saving buildings to make our communities healthier and safer. All the while, architects work with clients and allied design professionals and construction partners to improve the built environment in a $1 trillion sector that accounts for almost 6 percent of the economy.

These priorities form the basis of our legislative goals. They are derived from the feedback we have received from thousands of members since the election. This federal agenda is our blueprint for achieving positive change in Washington by harnessing the power of architects and their allies to advocate to their elected representatives. Combined with architects’ advocacy in state houses and city halls across America, this agenda serves as a solid foundation upon which we will anchor our profession in this constantly changing political landscape.

Finally, our federal agenda represents the charge from our Board of Directors to reassert our values as a profession. As we have done since our founding we are committed to advancing public policies that seek the greater good and that foster stronger, more sustainable communities and a prosperous, equitable society for all.

This is where we stand—today and every day.

**We stand for equity and human rights**

Access to good design is a fundamental right, and architects are the agents of change to make this right a reality. We stand for human and civil rights, the universal respect for human dignity, and the unbiased treatment of all persons in employment, civic, and business transactions regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical abilities, or religious practices. Our commitment to tolerance is evidenced not just by the policies we adopt, but in the words we speak, the actions we take, and the buildings we design.

This is why we advocate for protecting and expanding laws that reflect these values, such as fair housing policies, civil rights protections, and accessibility to the built environment for all.

**We stand for architecture that strengthens our communities**

Infrastructure is more than roads and bridges. It is the public buildings that are the bedrock of our communities—like schools, hospitals, libraries, police and fire stations, parks and government buildings. For too long, policymakers allowed these spaces to deteriorate, reducing safety and diminishing the quality of life for millions across the nation. Architects are uniquely positioned to guide policymakers to make informed decisions about reinvesting in our communities’ essential buildings and spaces. That is why we advocate for policies that invest in well-designed civic infrastructure.
We stand for a sustainable future
At a time when the world is feeling the damaging effects of excessive carbon in our atmosphere, AIA will continue to advocate for policies that protect the environment by encouraging the design, preservation and construction of high-performing buildings. Reducing the carbon footprint of buildings is not just good for the environment; it’s good for business. According to a 2015 study, from 2011 to 2014, the green construction market generated $167.4 billion in GDP, supported over 2.1 million jobs and provided $147.7 billion in labor earnings. That is why we advocate for policies that lead to energy efficient, carbon neutral buildings.

We stand for protecting communities from the impact of climate change
Global warming and man-made hazards pose an increasing threat to the safety of the public and the vitality of our nation. Rising sea levels and devastating natural disasters result in unacceptable losses of life and property. Resilient and adaptable buildings are a community’s first line of defense against disasters and changing conditions of life and property. That is why we advocate for robust building codes and policies that make our communities more resilient.

We stand for economic opportunity
Architects, the backbone of the nation’s design and construction industry, are entrepreneurs and small businesses. Working in offices, storefronts, and home offices in every community, design firms do more than simply create great spaces: they create well-paying jobs and opportunity. But with narrow profit margins and increasing costs of running a firm, many struggle just to meet their business plans.
We stand for federal policies that help firms thrive, not hold them back. That means a tax code that treats architects fairly, small business programs that provide loans and financing support and programs that give small firms the chance to compete. That is why AIA advocates for policies that ensure small firms remain strong contributors to the nation’s economy.

We stand for investing in the future
A generation of young people is being held back by a lack of access to education and the crushing burden of student debt. Nowhere is this truer than in architecture, where recent graduates are often forced to leave the profession to pay down student loans. Without a pool of qualified architects to design buildings, projects will not move forward, stifling economic development. That is why AIA advocates for policies that provide better access and financing for young people to enter and remain in the profession of architecture.

We speak up, and policymakers listen
Together, AIA members carry a powerful voice for the values they uphold in their practices each and every day. As natural facilitators and problem-solvers, architects stand ready to develop new policies that create a better, stronger, and more equitable and sustainable society. Through a culture of values-based advocacy, AIA members are committed to engaging in the policy-making process and to focus the power of design on solving the challenges facing our great nation.