



AIANY goes to Washington to discuss legislative priorities

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By Jill Lerner, FAIA

It was a busy and productive month for our advocacy team. It's clear from the great results and our conversations that we are having with government officials that the voice of the architecture community is being heard. Following is an update on work that we are performing on behalf of our members and related professionals.

We are pleased to report that on March 6th the NYC Lobbying Commission released its final report and recommendations seeking to strengthen New York City's lobbying laws. Since 2011, the AIANY has worked with the commission to clarify and modify the proposed mandates which would require architects presenting plans to any government body to register as lobbyists, which would have massive implications for architects and firms both large and small. In its final report, the commission agreed with our position and incorporated our recommendations.

On March 21st, we made our annual lobbying trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with our elected representatives in congress. This year, we met with congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, and staff from the offices of congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, congressman Charles Rangel, congressman Jerrold Nadler, as well as congresswoman Nita Lowey. We were pleased to have the chance to discuss our legislative priorities for architects locally and nationally. All of the issues we discussed were met with support and encouragement, despite the difficulty of achieving positive results in such a divided congress.

We discussed the following legislative items of importance to AIANY in 2013:

Post-Sandy Efforts: Our delegation educated our elected officials on our collaborative initiative with sister organizations to investigate issues and outline options and opportunities to address the long-term impacts of the Superstorm and the escalating effects of climate change on New York City. We discussed how policies affecting design can make a difference.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): We advised them that the chapter is focused on producing recommendations which will be offered to the agency on best practices to build back better and smarter.

Good Samaritan Legislation: We discussed that in the aftermath of natural or man-made disasters such as Superstorm Sandy, protections need to be afforded to architects and other volunteers who provide professional services at the direction of a public official. We also informed them of the chapter's advocacy efforts to pass Good Samaritan legislation on the state level.

Additionally, we advocated for funding for mass transit; we asked for their support in a regional approach to resiliency, noting senator Charles Schumer's idea for an Army Corp of Engineers comprehensive study; we stressed the importance of immigration reform to allow talented, foreign-born architects and designers to stay in New York; and requested they consider tax

incentives for firms doing international projects that creates jobs locally.

All were familiar with the Center for Architecture and many of the building-related issues in their districts. Congressman Rangel's office expressed particular interest in the outcome of our Emerging New York Architects committee's (ENYA) Harlem Edge competition.

We also echoed the legislative agenda for AIA National titled "Let's Get America Building." Real estate professionals should take note that architects are the front line of an industry that accounts for one in nine dollars of the U.S. GDP; every \$1 billion invested in building design and construction yields 28,500 full time jobs. The national agenda included tax reform to help small businesses, tax deductions for energy retrofits on commercial buildings, student debt relief through community service, common-sense reforms to small business procurement, and nationwide Good Samaritan legislation. The AIA New York State delegation also met with staff from the offices of senator Schumer and senator Kirsten Gillibrand to convey similar messages.

In summary, it was an active few days in Washington, and we will continue to follow up with our legislators to keep them abreast of our key concerns.

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