AIA BAN OF INTERIOR DESIGN

If you do not know the importance of an Interior Design Practice Act, listen up! A Practice Act is the only way to legislatively protect the interior design professional practice. If you are an interior designer currently space planning/preparing layouts for construction documents, or specifying interior finish materials, your right to perform these services may be coming to an end. The AIA strategy in Pennsylvania is to create a joint board with the engineers defining exclusive practice scopes for each occupation. In New Jersey (currently holding a Title Act), this type of A&E marriage has already occurred and produced a “Service Act” that prohibits contractors and interior designers from submitting drawings for permitting without an architect or engineer’s seal, and further prohibits the specification of materials.

SO…what are interior designers allowed to do??!! Well, according to the AIA, if you want to practice interior design (as defined by the NCIDQ) become an architect because you are illegally practicing “interior architecture”. Last month the release of the AIA “Angle” newsletter openly attacked interior designers stating “These bills (Practice Acts) would allow less-qualified individuals to offer interior architecture services, and place licensed architects in the subordinate role when working on interior spaces”.

AIA ATTACK

1. The AIA most frequently uses scare tactics (to get architects to call their legislators) in order to defeat any attempt of interior design regulation stating that firms practicing interior design without a registered interior designer will be fined 1,000. TRUTH: There are 4 states and 2 provinces that hold Practice Acts. In every instance architects have NEVER been placed in a subordinate role to interior designers. Retailers, Decorators, and Architects are always excluded from any enforcement of the Practice Act—this means NO FINES.

2. The president of NCARB, AIA member Frank Guillot states that interior designers argue they need licensure because the IBC creates confusion concerning preparation of CD’s by designers. He further states there is no confusion because the IBC uses the term “design professional”. TRUTH: The IBC and IRC uses the term “registered design professional” so if you are not registered you are considered unqualified to practice the services as listed within the IBC. Interior designers are not recognized as a profession in PA and have no state regulated registration that would allow designers to perform services as listed by the IBC and IRC.

3. The AIA claims the NCIDQ does not satisfactorily prove a candidate’s competence to recognize structural, mechanical, and other life safety systems of interior space. This statement assumes interior designers regulated under a Practice Act would be performing structural, mechanical, and life safety systems work. TRUTH: All Practice Acts have limited the service scope of interior designers by specifically excluding construction of structural, mechanical, plumbing, HVAC, electrical, vertical transportation systems, or construction which materially affects lifesafety systems pertaining to firesafety protection for demising walls, penetrations/shafts, smoke evacuation and compartmentalization. These services ALWAYS require a specialist. Interior designers have NEVER pursued regulation to perform these services.

HELP JOIN OUR FIGHT

We do not have enough interior designers making a public stand partnering with IDLCPA. Currently our statewide membership is less then 60 with most of the membership numbers coming from the Pittsburgh area. This representation tells legislators that the majority of designers are either not in support or are neutral to supporting interior design regulation. Delaware is currently fighting against the Service Act legislation and if we do not do something soon, Pennsylvania is next. The next 10 years will more then likely re-define the practice of interior design. If the AIA wins over our legislators’ designers will be forced to partner with architects or fluff pillows.