



President's Message

February 28, 2023

As citizens of the United States, we are afforded the fundamental opportunity to walk the halls of Congress and speak with those who represent us.

We collectively acted on this opportunity during the AIA Leadership Summit (formerly Grassroots) held last week in Washington DC. For those who have not attended, the event revolves around Capitol Hill visits with our representatives in both the House and Senate. During these visits we proactively endorse and support agenda items relevant to our profession. This year, roughly 600 architects from across the nation attended and participated in this momentous event.

The focus for our 2023 Summit was two bipartisan pieces of legislation that AIA advocated for on behalf of its members and our communities:

Democracy in Design Act

An executive order passed in 2020 titled *Executive Order on Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture* that mandated an official governmental preference for “classical” and “traditional” architectural styles for federal courthouses and federal buildings over \$50 million. Thankfully, in 2021 this executive order was revoked, but a precedent has been set. Without clear legislation to prevent this from happening again, future presidents could enact similar executive orders to suite their personal style preferences.

The legislation would:

- Prevent the federal government from mandating design styles.
- Require future changes to the GSA’s Design Excellence Program undergo a public comment period, facilitating more inclusive input and providing more transparency.

Resilient America Act

Severe weather events are becoming more frequent and post-disaster recovery costs are growing. The Federal Government is in a unique position to support communities through pre-disaster mitigation funding. In Michigan, we know all too well the flooding issues many of our communities have experienced. Recent floods have affected me personally. In 2017 my Midland home flooded during a 100-year storm event that put 17 inches of water in my home. If that wasn’t bad enough, in 2020 a 500-year storm event caused multiple dam failures along the Tittabawassee River in Gladwin and Midland Counties that left over 5 foot of water in my home. I was one of the lucky ones, as many of my friends and neighbors lost the entire contents of their homes, and in some cases their complete home or business was carried away with the flood waters.



The legislation would:

- Increase the amount of pre-disaster mitigation funding available through FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program.
- Encourage states to adopt updated building codes. (The national institute of Building Sciences reports that adopting the latest consensus-based building codes and standards saves \$11 for every \$1 invested in post-disaster recovery.)

Our visits were received well and it is our hope that we will see these items passed in legislation. It is important that we retain our ability to creatively adapt to current issues of the day and proactively support policy that positively affects our communities and our profession. Continued participation in these events will preserve our ongoing professional endeavors and ensure we are able to flourish collectively.

Finally, I would like to say something about Damian Farrell, FAIA. As many of you know Damian passed away earlier this month, and although I can't say I was close to Damian, I did know him from our time spent together on the AIA Michigan Board. Damian was a husband, father, grandfather, and son. He was a friend, kind, and charming. We'll miss having Damian around and part of our lives.

Paul Haselhuhn, AIA
AIA Michigan President 2023