



February 17, 2009

Dear Fellow AIA Member,

Earlier today, President Obama signed into law a major economic recovery bill intended to create jobs and lessen the impact of the recession. This bill has many profound impacts on our profession and our communities, which have been so badly affected by the financial crisis.

I would like to take a few moments to discuss what this bill may mean for us.

When policymakers began laying the groundwork for this economic stimulus package last November, members said the AIA should do all it could on their behalf to improve the plan. Our goal from the start was to ensure that if taxpayer dollars were spent to build new infrastructure, the projects had to be built better: greener, more high performing buildings, a 21st century transportation system, better designed schools and hospitals, and—perhaps most importantly—financial relief for the thousands of design firms struggling through this economic crisis.

Another goal was to educate our leaders and policy makers that the stimulus bill should fund not only projects that are "shovel-ready," but those that have the best chance of succeeding, drawing on the talents and expertise of our nation's design professionals, to help improve our communities. In December, with advice and guidance from so many of you, our [Rebuild & Renew plan](#) launched. The key focus of the AIA plan ensured that the economic stimulus reflected our priorities and principles emphasizing sustainable design and safe, healthy, livable communities. The positive response from policymakers, from our allied professions, and others has been incredible.

#### *Ground Breaking Support for the Built Environment*

The AIA was asked to testify before Congress. Leading organizations from across the political spectrum, from the National Education Association to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to the Sierra Club to the Associated Builders and Contractors, worked alongside us on parts of our plan. Nearly 900 of your fellow members of the AIA marched on Capitol Hill this month during Grassroots to make the case. And, AIA members sent nearly 11,000 messages to Congress in support of [Rebuild & Renew](#).

Although the [final bill](#) signed into law today does not include everything we asked for, thanks to your support it represents the largest federal investment in

green, high-performing buildings in recent memory. Billions of dollars for each of the following areas are included in the bill:

- Funding for school districts to modernize, renovate and repair schools
- Green affordable housing and help for millions of Americans to make their homes more energy efficient
- Requiring the federal government to make its buildings more energy efficient, saving taxpayers millions of dollars in energy costs
- Assistance to states and local governments to make energy efficient upgrades to buildings and communities
- Supports for mass transit systems and the construction and renovation of intermodal transit facilities to relieve the congestion that is choking our communities

Each of these provisions—key planks in the AIA's [Rebuild & Renew](#) plan—requires the talents of architects and other design professionals to make them real. In all, we estimate that these provisions and others in the bill will create or save as many as 14,000 architect jobs over the next two years.

The legislation also includes many provisions that will help you, your families, and your firms through these hard times. Some of those measures include:

- A refundable tax credit of up to \$400 per worker (\$800 per couple filing jointly)
- An expansion of the child tax credit
- An extension of the bonus depreciation and increased small business expensing for businesses making investments in plants and equipment in 2009
- Several tax relief measures to help small firms, including small business expensing for investment in new plants and equipment, loss carry back for small businesses, a delay of the 3% withholding tax on payments to businesses that sell goods or services to governments,

and a cut in the capital gains tax cut for investors in small businesses who hold stock for more than five years

- An extension through December 2009 of the extended unemployment benefits program (which provides up to 33 weeks of extended benefits) that is otherwise scheduled to begin to phase out at the end of March
  
- A 65% subsidy for COBRA premiums for laid-off workers for up to 9 months

The plan is far from perfect. Even its backers acknowledge the fact that this will remain a deep and painful recession for some time. But it represents a major effort to help those most in need and provides resources to begin fixing our nation's crumbling infrastructure.

Over the last three months, I was privileged to hear from so many of you about the AIA plan—those who thought the plan was too big, too small, or just right; those who thought the plan was too focused on one sector over another, and those who said it was right on target. Many of the items that the AIA fought for came directly from the suggestions of members who took the time to call me or my fellow Board members or the AIA staff in Washington. It was a truly collaborative effort. And the success of our plan shows that when the AIA and its members provide meaningful insights based on our wealth of expertise, policymakers listen.

#### *Hard Work Ahead*

Now that the [economic stimulus bill](#) is law, we must be ready to work closely with state and local officials to help them use these resources effectively. Billions of dollars are now flowing to the states for projects they hope to begin as soon as possible. Our elected leaders need the advice and counsel of architects to ensure that we do, in fact, build better. As I write to you, the AIA national staff is working with AIA Component leaders at the state and local level to provide resources, information, and guidance to architects to help them make the case to their government and civic leaders and the communities we serve about how to invest taxpayers' dollars wisely.

This bill's investments in infrastructure are a modest start. With a \$2.2 trillion national shortfall in infrastructure investment, including a \$300 billion need to repair and modernize schools, the work is far from over. The bill is just a down

payment, and we will continue fighting for additional investment to make sure our nation has a 21st century infrastructure for a 21st century economy.

Although this bill is intended to help, we have many long days head. This is the worst economic crisis that I have seen in my career; I have heard first-hand from so many of you about the hardships you face: having to lay off talented and loyal staff or being laid off yourself, seeing the job inquiries drop off, wondering how you are going to pay the bills and keep going in the profession you love.

The AIA can help—through our [Navigating the Economy](#) Web section, through sessions at the [AIA National Convention](#) April 30-May 2 in San Francisco, and through programs at the national, state and local levels to help all of us weather these hard times. If we stay together through this, we will see our profession emerge stronger and more able than ever to help rebuild and renew our nation.

There is more to do and I will keep you informed over the coming months about our ongoing advocacy on your behalf. For now, let's seize the opportunities presented in this bill. We have important contributions to make for the future of our communities, firms, careers, and for our profession.

Sincerely,

Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA  
President