

## Ben Tiseo, AIA, Producing Legislative Victories in Michigan

Contributed by AIA Michigan

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### SUMMARY

The strength of an AIA component is created through its members. Active, energetic, and forward-looking members help propel a component forward. For AIA Detroit and AIA Michigan, Benedetto Tiseo, AIA, helps form that strength. He has actively pursued local and state legislative affairs issues for more than two decades. For his actions, he was awarded a 2010 Grassroots Excellence Award to celebrate his involvement with the AIA and share his accomplishments.

### A LEGISLATIVE INTEREST FORMS

Benedetto (Ben) Tiseo, AIA, began his interest in political affairs in Detroit in the 1980's. At this time, a rise in practicing unlicensed architects was lightly controlled. Ben was unimpressed with the State licensing board's actions and, in response, formed the AIA Detroit Professional Practice Committee to affect change. That Committee was successful in its charge – so successful that it was folded into what became the AIA Michigan Government Affairs Committee. This larger government affairs organization was formed to cast a broader net on regulating unlicensed architects.

### GOING TO THE STATE

Ben successfully raised awareness of unlicensed practice and thus moved his attention to proactively engaging state and local politicians. Until that time, AIA Michigan had been largely a reactive organization, developing and advancing legislative positions as the activities of others warranted. Ben worked with the AIA Michigan legislative counsel to transition the AIA Michigan legislative capability into an affirmative voice.

### SHARING HIS IDEAS NATIONALLY

Face to face contact with legislators is crucial to the effectiveness of any legislative plan. In recognizing the importance of personal contact, Ben developed AIA Michigan's legislative day. It is now a popular legislative program that draws over 100 architects to the State Capitol each year. Every spring, architects congregate in Lansing to engage their legislators in meaningful discussion on issues concerning the profession.

Another important aspect of the legislative process is active fundraising. Ben organized a number of political fundraisers and eventually developed a short instruction manual outlining the most efficient manner in which to organize those activities. He has now been able to affect national legislative efforts by disseminating the instruction manual to AIA national and other state and local components.

### RESOURCES

#### More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 21.03.17 Texas Legislative Volunteer Hollye Fisk
- 21.03.16 Architects and the Art of Lobbying
- 21.03.11 AIA Florida Architects Champion Important Legislation

#### Feedback

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#### Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components
- Legislation