April 15, 2010

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Chairman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
446 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kerry:

We, the undersigned organizations and companies representing the United States building design and construction industry, write in strong support of your legislation, The Embassy Design and Security Act of 2010.

Every day, our members use the most advanced materials and technology available to design, build, operate and maintain structures that are sustainable, safe, secure, accessible, and cost-efficient. High performance buildings are more energy- and water-efficient, safer and more secure, create better and healthier working and living environments, and provide a strong return on investment to their owners. High performance building design helps owners avoid having to make such choices as security over sustainability, or performance over aesthetics. Building professionals bring value throughout the design and construction process, enabling structures to achieve all of these multiple high performance objectives.

The federal government is increasingly looking to design and build high performance buildings, primarily through the formation of an Office of Federal High Performance Green Buildings at the General Services Administration. In addition, Congress has recognized the importance of high performance buildings by forming the first-ever High Performance Building Congressional Caucus in 2008.

Embassies and diplomatic compounds play many different roles, from serving as office and meeting space to providing housing and logistical support. American embassies are built in every climate and security condition imaginable, and they must be designed with the unique capacities, culture and needs of the local community in mind. It is essential that embassies and diplomatic missions reflect the highest levels of American expertise and practice in high performance building.

The Embassy Design and Security Act recognizes the vital role that building design plays in ensuring high performance by establishing a Design Excellence program at the State Department and by ensuring that experts from the design, construction and security fields can advise the Department on its work. The legislation will help the State Department take a leadership role in high performance buildings by encouraging innovation in design, creating a framework for testing new technologies, and providing training in high performance building attributes. Not only will this legislation foster greater innovation in the design of U.S. diplomatic facilities. It will also give the United States a platform to demonstrate to host nations the possibilities of high performance buildings and share how they can contribute to a more sustainable future.

We commend you for your leadership on promoting high performance embassies, and we urge Congress to quickly pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

American Institute of Architects
AEC Science & Technology
American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc.
Center for Environmental Innovation in Roofing
Ecobuild America
Federation of American Scientists
Green Builder
Green Building Initiative
GREENGUARD Environmental Institute
InfoComm International
International Association of Heat & Frost Insulators and Allied Workers
International Association of Lighting Designers
International Code Council
Johnson Controls
National Fire Protection Association
National Institute of Building Sciences
National Insulation Association
NEMA - The Association of Electrical and Medical Imaging Equipment Manufacturers
SAGE Electrochromics, Inc.
Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association, Inc.
The Stella Group, Ltd.
Sustainable Buildings Industry Council
The Vinyl Institute
U.S. Green Building Council