



July 27, 2012

The Honorable Daniel Tangherlini
Acting Administrator
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Acting Administrator Tangherlini:

The American Institute of Architects commends the GSA for its commitment to the design of sustainable, high performance facilities that provide lasting benefits to the federal government and the American people. As Acting Public Buildings Commissioner Linda Chero stated at GSA's Moynihan Symposium held last May in conjunction with the AIA National Convention, "Design creates value."

AIA members are uniquely positioned to assist the GSA and all federal agencies fulfill their requirements for sustainable, high performance buildings. For more than sixty years, AIA architects have led the effort to design, build and renovate federal facilities for the GSA that not only serve as brick-and-mortar representations of the national government, but provide the best value possible to U.S. taxpayers. Architects lead a design process that results in more energy efficient buildings and advise their clients on all matters related to sustainability, including materials selection and the application of appropriate, cost-effective rating systems.

The AIA believes that sustainability is not a luxury, but a necessity. Buildings and their use account for nearly half of all carbon emissions in the United States and 70 percent of electricity use. As one of the largest building owners in the world, the GSA has both the obligation and the opportunity to play a leadership role in facilitating the advancement of design techniques, materials and practices that will help all building owners reduce their energy use.

As the GSA moves forward in its role as the nation's landlord to address a wide range of statutory and regulatory challenges, the AIA wishes to outline key principles we believe the federal government should follow:

- Move aggressively to implement federal energy requirements. Under federal statute and Executive Orders, the GSA and other agencies are required to meet aggressive targets to reduce energy consumption and fossil fuel use. The AIA

believes that federal agencies, including GSA, must continue their efforts to meet these targets, not only to reduce the federal government's overall energy consumption, but also to help shepherd in new technologies and design practices that can be transitioned to the private sector.

The AIA opposes efforts by some in Congress to prevent agencies from fulfilling their missions by blocking funding for sustainable design requirements, including those of Section 433 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. The best way for federal agencies to show the public that these requirements represent good public policy is to continue procuring the services of architects and other design professionals who are best equipped to demonstrate their feasibility.

- Base sustainability decisions on objective information. Although the AIA does not endorse specific ratings systems, the Institute believes strongly in the development, evaluation, and use of evidence-based rating systems, as well as building codes and standards, that promote the design, preservation, and construction of sustainable communities and high performance buildings. As GSA continues to evaluate rating systems under EISA, it should rely on objective data and feedback from those without a vested interest in the outcome.
- Continue to invest in Design Excellence. Fifty years after future Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan first drafted the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture, their call for designs that “reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the American National Government” has never been more relevant. Design excellence is about far more than aesthetics; it is a process by which architects and other design professionals help agencies create facilities and spaces that achieve multiple goals, from sustainability to security to accessibility. More importantly, design excellence translates into structures that last longer and are more cost effective to operate in the long run. At a time when agencies are forced to spend scarce dollars wisely, design is a small investment that pays high dividends.

The AIA continues to remain concerned that architectural services are being offered on GSA schedules in violation of Brooks Act qualifications based selection procedures. Design is not a commodity that should be bought from the cheapest offeror. The AIA urges that the GSA remove architectural services from schedules and require agencies to select designers based on their qualifications.

- Ensure opportunities for emerging talent. Providing pathways for small architecture firms to participate in the federal marketplace not only allows

agencies to meet their legal set-aside requirements; it also provides a source of emerging talent ready and willing to tackle the major design challenges the government faces. Emerging architecture professionals increasingly view sustainability not as a specialty but as an integral part of everyday practice, pushing the standard for innovation and performance ever higher.

However, recent trends towards increasing the number of finalists in design-build projects, combined with the high cost of competing in these competitions, drive away smaller firms and deny the federal government the skills and energy these firms bring. The AIA urges the GSA to reduce the number of finalists and provide stipends, to the extent possible, to those firms to defray the cost of competing for federal design work.

Under your leadership, the GSA and its staff are working hard to meet the challenge of providing the federal government with high performance, sustainable buildings in a time of smaller budgets. The AIA and its more than 80,000 members stand ready to work with you to design and construct the next generation of federal facilities that deliver value to taxpayers and symbolize the vigor and vitality of our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Ivy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert Ivy, FAIA
Executive Vice President/Chief Executive Officer