

★ ISSUE BRIEF

Help Young Architects Help Their Communities

AIA POSITION

The AIA urges Congress to pass H.R. 4205, the National Design Services Act, which provides student debt relief to graduating architecture students who agree to work in distressed communities.

BACKGROUND

Architecture students are graduating with extremely high loan balances, causing many to leave the profession, depriving the country of the professionals who will design and retrofit the next generation of buildings.

Architects are at the leading edge of a design and construction industry that is still struggling to recover from the economic crisis. Without a pool of qualified architects to design building projects, those projects will not move forward.

A recent poll conducted by the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) of hundreds of architecture school graduates revealed the extent of the problem. Respondents had an average of \$40,000 in accumulated debt after graduation, as well as many unexpected costs specific to their architectural training. These costs included more than \$1,000 annually on materials for models and project submissions, \$800 on text books and technology spending, accounting for a total of \$1,500 a year in additional accumulated debt.

The Federal government provides student loan aid for medical, legal and veterinary school graduates who work in underserved areas. Architecture students and graduates can provide design work that is enormously helpful in assisting underserved communities. Congress can help the design and construction industry get back on its feet and move projects forward by including architecture school graduates in the same kinds of programs that offer other graduates loan debt assistance if they donate their services to their communities and elsewhere.

H.R. 4205, the National Design Services Act of 2014, introduced by Reps. Ed Perlmutter (D-CO), Dennis Ross (R-FL), Gwen Moore (D-WI) and Gregory Meeks (D-NY), would enable architecture students and recent graduates to work with non-profit community design centers for a set period of time in exchange for student debt relief. This bill will help revitalize underserved communities while relieving the financial burdens on the next generation of architects.

