

IIDA Advocacy Action Plan

For Legislative States

states interested in pursuing legislation or currently pursuing legislation

Establish Connections and Relationships with other Professional Organizations*

Your State's organization of building officials: This organization can have a variety of names like the Ohio Building Officials Association, California Building Officials Association (CALBO), and the Colorado Chapter of the International Code Council (you can find additional organizations in the appendix). These associations are incredibly important, especially if your state already has a law. This is how most interior designers, who wish to submit their own work, interact with the government. It's important that they know who interior designers are and what they are capable of.

Since your state likely does have a lobbyist, reach out to them to see if the lobbyist could connect you with anyone in the state. If not, the best option is to ask your board and city center leaders if they know anyone at these organizations. It's possible that a designer who regularly submits plans may know someone who is a code official or a local IIDA leader also involved in a local women's business organization.

If you find that your chapter does not have any member connections with the organization, the best thing to do is to look them up on their website and contact their chapter leadership and/or chapter administrator. You can find a sample email in the appendix. Ask to attend a chapter meeting or conference so that you may present to the organization what commercial interior design is and how it connects/touches their organization. For example, if you were presenting to building officials, it would be important to focus on permitting and the designers' expertise in understanding of the code. If you were presenting to a women's business organization, it might be more important to focus on the demographics and opportunities within the interior design industry.

Develop an Advocacy Fundraiser

Like most chapter activities, advocacy needs funding to achieve success. Depending on the goals of the chapter, the efforts can be a part of or supplemental to existing fundraising efforts. IIDA Headquarters recommends reserving approximately 1-5% of your budget for advocacy.

- The New England Chapter rolled out the “**One Bill at a Time**” campaign to both honor previous successful legislative efforts in Massachusetts and to add a dollar surcharge to each ticket for every event. This minimal extra cost built into the ticket price helps to fund their lobbyist.
- Starting in October 2020, all members have the opportunity to make an Advocacy Contribution to their chapter. On member renewal invoices, there is an optional line item for a base-line contribution of \$10 to advocacy. If members renew online, they can add the \$10 Advocacy Contribution as an additional item under Contribution Opportunities and choose to increase that amount in increments of \$10. All contributions made by a member will be automatically designated to that member’s chapter.
- Many chapters have found that the best way to either kick-start or to establish a very stable financial base for their advocacy efforts is to establish a signature event, whose proceeds are specifically earmarked for advocacy. For more ideas on event types, please refer to IIDA’s Advocacy Event Guide.

Review Your Multi-Year Advocacy Strategic Plan

Even if your chapter is in the middle of a legislative initiative, it’s important to find the time to review your goals to make sure that your chapter is reaching them, and that the goals are still relevant. It’s possible that now is the best time to add new goals or update existing goals to ensure that the chapter’s overall mission is being met.

Review and set goals for the next 1-2 years

Find members in every legislative district: If the chapter hasn’t already, a good goal to set is to find members in every legislative district. If that’s not feasible, work with your lobbyists to identify the most important districts and find advocates in those districts. The legislators could be on important committees, in leadership roles, or in otherwise important positions. Educate those advocates on how to talk about their profession and how to talk to a legislator.

Build relationships with five organizations that might support the legislation: The number is arbitrary but set a number that helps the chapter measure its success. The important part here is to build lasting organizational relationships with other groups. IIDA highly recommends beginning with contacting the local group for building officials.

Grow the advocacy committee and advocates: You should already have an advocacy committee if you are pursuing legislation. However, you may now know which roles you need filled or how many folks you need involved. It’s a good idea to start with advocacy chairs from the local city centers as the basis for building an advocacy committee. An advocacy committee should ideally have the ability to communicate with legislators and other officials, represent the population centers of the state, and represent different sectors of the industry.

Establish a Budget

A sufficient advocacy budget is necessary to meet the chapters advocacy and legislative goals. If a chapter is not pursuing legislation, approximately 1-5% of the budget should be spent on advocacy efforts. This includes sending two board members to the advocacy symposium, covering the costs of fundraising events, etc. If the advocacy committee does not use all of their funds, they should be earmarked for future lobbying efforts. The average lobbyist for IIDA costs between \$2,000-\$10,000 a month. IIDA Headquarters expects chapters to contribute to the costs of the contract. It is strongly suggested that the chapter fundraise just for advocacy.

Refine your Advocacy Communications Plan

If your chapter has not already established them, develop in-chapter protocol for sharing advocacy news, updates, and information. How is information from IIDA Headquarters advocacy calls relayed to the rest of the board? Is there an opportunity for the advocacy VP to give an update at each meeting? How productive are those updates? Who should be on advocacy calls to keep folks updated, but not overwhelmed?

In order to ensure everyone on the board has a basic understanding of advocacy, Headquarters highly recommends showing the Advocacy 101 webinar to the entire board during a retreat. At each board meeting, the VP of Advocacy should be prepared to give an informative update to the board. This could be an update on the advocacy fundraiser, planned advocacy trainings or site visits, or information from the advocacy symposium. This is the time to relay any information from Headquarters about grants, news, or initiatives. Additionally, the VP of Advocacy should provide any pertinent updates for the members to the VP of Communications, especially if they need to be sent out via eblast, social media, or newsletter.

Please refer to the IIDA Advocacy Communication Guide for more information.

Create an Advocacy Committee

When your state has an active piece of legislation, it's vital to have an advocacy committee. It is an important part of delegating the work and ensuring as many people are involved as possible. This helps for succession planning, but also gives a wide array of possible people to testify and be involved in legislative efforts. The advocacy committee should be geographically diverse, if possible. It should also represent the industry in the state—business owners, emerging professionals, students, professions, designers at big/small firms, etc.

The best place to start building an advocacy committee is to start with the city centers. Each city center should have an advocacy chair as one of the board positions. An advocacy city chair is responsible for educating the city center board on any updates from the chapter board and/or Headquarters. They should provide updates from the VP of Advocacy about upcoming initiatives, events, or programs. Additionally, they should report back to the VP of Advocacy any city issues. For example, there may be issues in the area with permit acceptance or perhaps the membership has advocacy ideas. The advocacy chair also plans local advocacy events with the events chair.

Once you've assembled your advocacy committee, it's important to keep them engaged in advocacy. Don't wait months on end without checking in with them or having a meeting. The committee should be actively working on grassroots advocacy and moving the bill forward.

Educate the Membership

One of the primary things that the advocacy committee can do if there is pending legislation is educate their local membership. This includes students and professors. Please refer to the appendix for ideas on how to engage professors and students.

The chapter should be educating interior designers on what the law says; essentially, what can a registered interior designer do and what can they NOT do. IIDA Headquarters and your local lobbyists can help prepare webinars about why there is a bill, what the bill means, and what the next steps could be. This is an important step— an educated membership is more likely to take action when it's needed. Make sure there are updates on social media and in newsletters about what is happening in the state capitol. Silence from the chapter board about ongoing legislation makes folks nervous.

Education can also include how to get NCIDQ certified and state registered. IIDA has a series of webinars available free of charge to members about the value of advocacy, how to explain what you do, and more. The chapter should also be educating the membership about how to talk about what they do. This is not only an important skill for talking to legislators but also is helpful for talking to clients and other construction industry partners. Feel free to brainstorm unique and creative ideas as well, whether it's about sustainability advocacy or women leadership in business.

IIDA Headquarters highly encourages chapters to find ways to weave advocacy education at least partially into other portions of existing programming. If the chapter already offers NCIDQ prep courses, add information about getting state registered to that course, for example.

The VP of Advocacy has access to all of these via the IIDA Advocacy Dropbox.

CIDQ and IIDA both have additional resources available about the value of certification and registration. Contact CIDQ at inquiries@cidq.org or IIDA at advocacy@iida.org.

Educate Construction and Building Industries

Since there is or will be active legislation, it will be vitally important to educate the groups in the construction and building industries on what interior designers do, what the current law is, and what the bill will/won't change. You will also want them to know that you're available to be a resource for them. Over time, it will be important that they understand what a designer can and cannot do under the current law. More importantly, they should feel comfortable with how interior designers are trained and educated. This can be done through lunch and learns, presentations at their state or local conferences, presentations at their board meetings, or inviting them to your events. This will be a slow process that will happen over months if not years. The key is to build a relationship over the long term. To prevent burnout, invite different board members to give the presentations once they've been trained on it.

Plan Advocacy Initiatives

Volunteer for the bill champions and bill supporters: If it is an election year, it's a great opportunity to get advocates involved in the campaigns for the bill sponsors or supporters of the bill. This can be door-knocking, handing out campaign flyers, or phone-banking (calling people). This is one of the best ways to show the profession's support of an elected official without any financial contributions. Gather a group of three to five (3-5) volunteers and let your lobbyists know you want to volunteer. Volunteers will work with the campaign manager to schedule when and what tasks will be performed. Check with your state's lobbyists about which campaigns to focus on.

Lunch and Learns: Lunch and learns are a great opportunity to bring advocacy to designers and not make designers work to advocate. These lunch-and-learns should be about what the bill does, what the current law is, and how the advocates can support the effort. Depending on the chapter's budget, the chapter could provide lunch. IIDA Headquarters can also help set up webinars to reach as many advocates as possible. Invite the state's lobbyists to participate in these webinars.

Host campaign fundraisers for legislators: ALWAYS FOLLOW YOUR STATE'S LAWS ABOUT FUNDRAISING. If you are unsure, ask your state's lobbyist.

One way to do accomplish this is to host an in-person fundraiser at a design showroom or in an interior design studio. Work with your lobbyists to determine the best date, time, and venue for your event. Promote the event via targeted email or other targeted approaches. Let invitees know that attendees are encouraged to bring a small check of \$25-\$50. The event should be similar to a cocktail hour.

Another option is to send targeted emails to supporters of the legislation asking them if they would be willing to contribute financially to the campaigns of the bill sponsors. A sample letter is available in the appendix.

Get Out the Vote/Get Registered: These are programs that are only good in election years, however, they provide a civic service to the membership, increases voter registration, and increases voter participation, which are all positives. These drives can be as simple as referring members to the state voter registration site and reminding them of important voter registration dates. Most states have a deadline for registration for voting and have a deadline for things like requests for mail-in ballots. It's an important service of the chapter to ensure their membership is engaged in the civic process in the most basic way, even if there is not pending legislation.

Have advocates attend legislator town halls and have local meetings: Legislators, especially during campaign years, will often have town halls or local meetings to hear from their constituents.

Industry Advocacy Roundtables: What does the interior design leadership in your state think about the laws about tax, ownership, registration? What can't they do that they want to do? What problems exist at the state or local level?

- Year or two prior to introduction
- Focus on biggest impact
- Answer could be no legislation
- Some answers could be through regulation—always talk to Headquarters

Appendix A: Organizations to Contact

Green: Government

Blue: A&D Industry

Purple: Other

American Institute of Architects (AIA)	National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB)
American Society of Interior Designers (ASID)	Home Builders Association: State and Local
State Association of Code Officials	State and Local Realtors Association
State Department of Commerce under the Governor	State Apartment Association
Any state job or economic development commission or initiative	Affiliated Construction Trades (plumbers, electricians, etc.)
State University Interior Design Programs and Departments	State Contractors Association
State Architects Board or joint board	House/Senate Republican Caucus
League of Cities/Municipal League	House/Senate Democratic Caucus
Architectural & Design Firm Principals and Leaders	Americans for Prosperity (AFP)
American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC)	Associated General Contractors
Women in the Economy Commission/State Women's Coalition	State Society of Professional Engineers
National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO)	State Association of Building Inspectors
State-based think tanks like Badger Institute, Buckeye Institute, and Platte Institute	State Building & Construction Trades Council
Associated Builders and Contractors (commercial contractor)	State chapter of the Building Owners & Managers Association
Chamber of Commerce: State, Regional, and City	State chapter of the American Society of Home Inspectors
Department of professions or occupations or labor	Urban Community Building Foundation of Ohio or similar organizations
Disability Law Center and Advocates	State chapter of National Kitchen and Bath Association
State Restaurant Association	State chapter of the Retail Merchants Association
	City and Regional Planning Commission

Appendix B: Sample Communications

Sample Email to Another Organization (No Legislation)

Good afternoon,

I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Abby Wilson, chapter president of the [STATE/AREA] Chapter of IIDA. We are the commercial interior design association with [NUMBER OF MEMBERS] members here in [STATE/AREA]. Our members are responsible for the design and construction management of interior buildouts of non-structural components in buildings.

Since your organization is also involved in the building and trades industry, we wanted to introduce ourselves and see if you were available for a quick chat; this would provide us the opportunity to learn more about your organization and gauge if there are any opportunities to work together.

Please respond at your earliest convenience.

Very best,

Abby

[Title]

Sample Email outreach to a state board regarding legislation

Leslie,

I am writing to you on behalf of IIDA, the commercial interior design association, to request a meeting with you and the Board Chairperson to discuss the proposed changes in HB3098 to the interior design registration, and would like to hear feedback, especially in regards to the provisions about the board. We would like to explain our reasoning and work with you for the best possible policy outcome.

Melanie Hamilton (our lobbyist), Ashley Wilkes (the advocacy and public policy manager at IIDA Headquarters), and Eugenie Butler will be participating in the meeting. Unfortunately, Mr. Wilkes is in Atlanta for a limited time frame; would you be able to meet Thursday 2/6? He is free outside of a noon meeting.

Thank you very much.

Rhett

Rhett Butler, IIDA
Registered Interior Designer
Scarlett O'Hara Design, Inc.
123 Tara Avenue
Atlanta, GA 34567

Sample Email to Another Organization (Pending Legislation)

Good Afternoon,

I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Abby Wilson, vice president of advocacy for the [STATE/AREA] Chapter and the current vice president of advocacy for IIDA. We are the commercial interior design association with [NUMBER OF MEMBERS] members here in [STATE/AREA].

Our members are responsible for the design and construction management of the interior buildouts of non-structural components in the interior environment.

HB50 is a bill that would establish a state certification of highly qualified interior designers and allow them to submit their own work to local building departments for approval. In order to even be eligible for state certification, an interior designer typically completes a CIDA-accredited, four-year interior design bachelor's program, 3,520 hours of supervised work experience, and a three-part exam, which includes the application of codes to the process of design through a practicum.

As a member of the construction community, you understand the importance of making sure that qualified people are in the roles of the construction process. We're the only non-licensed or certified profession at the job site with your members.

We'd love to discuss the bill more and how it could help your members more. Would you be available this week for a quick phone call with myself and our local lobbyist?

Thank you,

Abby

Appendix C: Sample Elevator Speeches

Student:

Hi, I'm Abby and I'm an interior design student at the University of Arizona. I thought when I decided on my major, I wanted to be a residential designer. But as I progressed through my program, I realized I want to pursue a career in commercial interior design, hopefully in healthcare.

My courses, including in _____ and in _____, have really shown me the impact the design can have on so many people who come into a public space. If I designed a maternity ward, it could have a lasting impact on generations to come as I apply the newest best practices and understanding of materials and how humans interact with the space.

After I graduate in _____, I will be working to complete the NCIDQ exam, which I feel is vital to be competitive in this employment market. It shows employers and clients that I have the basic competency necessary to make these health and safety decisions in the interior environment.

Interior Designer:

Hello, I'm Abby and I'm a practicing NCIDQ-certified interior design here in the Phoenix area. I work primarily on restaurant and hospitality design, where I ensure projects meet all relevant national, state, and local building codes and regulations. I have a bachelor's degree in interior design from Arizona State University, where I studied with architecture students, as many design students do. I, like all designers who have NCIDQ after their names, completed a rigorous three-part exam over 15 hours, which included practicing my design skills and applying codes to a design.

I get that most folks think interior design is mostly about paint and color but my day-to-day involves determining fire-rating for walls in hotel rooms and how to get disabled people out of the back corner of a restaurant safely and quickly in case of an emergency. Interior designers make life and safety decisions every day by looking at paths of egress, material appropriateness, and knowing when to call in other experts.

Commercial interior design is a very new industry compared to architecture, which has been around since the ancient Egyptians. Our profession wasn't established until the post-war era and as such we're restricted by outdated and under-inclusive laws. Ideally, we'd like to be able to submit our own drawings, so we keep our intellectual property, instead of giving them to another design professional to stamp and take ownership of.

Industry:

As a member of the interior design industry in the [FLOORING/FURNITURE/ETC] sector, I understand the role an interior designer plays in the design and building process. For a project to be successful, we must work with individuals who truly understand how our products interact—not only with the building and its systems, but also with the humans who will use our projects. I have found that interior designers, particularly those that are NCIDQ-certified, fully understand those two things.

We know that many people think interior designers only have “good eyes,” but it takes so much more than that to be a successful design partner to us. We appreciate working with designers that have degrees specifically in interior design or interior architecture, and we want to work with designers that have taken the NCIDQ exam. It saves us time and headaches in the process.

Appendix D: Sample Talking Points about Existing Legislation

- State Certification is proof to Utahns that commercial interior designers submitting plans for their very specific scope of work are adequately educated and experienced.
- State certification provides opportunities for commercial interior designers who, as independent registered design professionals, can submit their own work, which reduces the cost and time for the clients.
- During times of economic downturns like now, the interior design industry is often frequently hit first and longest. Designers who have this extra privilege are able to provide more to their clients and may be able to better withstand these downturns.
- State certification ensures Utahns that SCCIDs have up-to-date best practices for health and safety through mandatory continuing education.
- State certification is the culmination of an interior design degree. Current interior design students already deprived of the tradition education, will begin to look to states like Texas and Nevada where they can become a registered design professional.