

Architects & Advocacy

Be the Voice for Your Profession

Advocacy Is For Everyone

As an architect, you are in a unique position to understand problems and offer solutions. As trained critical thinkers you offer a vital voice in delivering messages that impact your communities. Advocacy is not something mysterious that can only be accomplished by a few. Advocacy is simply making your voice heard. Advocacy is sharing your expertise and collaborating with other professionals to make a difference.

Because advocacy is for everyone, we need you. We need your point of view as we navigate ways to achieve the profession's goals. Whether it be through state legislation, county boards, city councils, county offices, planning commissions, etc., architects have a role to play.

Why Is Advocacy Important?

Architects have a duty and professional responsibility to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare. Advocacy efforts draw attention to important issues or causes by educating decision-makers about the impact of their choices on how people live, work, and play. Policymakers work hard, but they cannot be experts in every possible area in which they have to make decisions. This is where you come in as informed, educated advocates. You have expertise and experience — use those to help solve problems and create better outcomes for communities.

What Can Architects Do?

To be involved in advocacy, architects simply need to stand up and talk about policies that fulfill the mission of supporting the creation of safe, beautiful, and sustainable environments. Here are some examples of what you can do as an advocate:

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|  Speak in public forums on issues important to you and the profession. |  Serve on a TxA committee like the Government Affairs Steering Committee or School Safety Subcommittee. |
|  Meet with elected officials, community leaders, and policymakers about architectural or design issues. |  Serve in state-appointed or elected positions on state boards & commissions. |
|  Volunteer to serve on boards within your community. |  Comment on testimony TxA provides on important issues. |
|  Organize educational opportunities for your community and policymakers. |  Volunteer as a subject matter expert for TxA or help identify the right people to talk to on a prevailing topic. |
|  Serve as a bill reader for TxA during the legislative session. |  Run for public office! |

As you can see, lobbying is not on the list, because advocacy does not equal lobbying. Advocacy can be a lot of things, while lobbying is a distinct activity. Lobbying is about attempting to influence specific legislation. Only lobbyists registered through the state, who follow specific guidelines and file ethics reports monthly can officially lobby the legislature on a piece of legislation. But anyone can advocate! You, as a member of TxA, can help share your knowledge and be an incredible influence on legislative outcomes.

Advocacy at Every Level

Federal/National

Advocating at the federal or national level can happen in Washington D.C. and also happens in elected official's home districts (where you live!). TxA can help make connections and share important topics about the profession with legislators and their professional staff. Federal/National advocacy can happen through AIA, government agencies, or other national organizations. TxA works closely with AIA to understand the issues they are prioritizing and bring those issues to our members for discussion, debate, and action as needed.

State Advocacy

TxA and our members represent the architectural profession at the state level. As an advocate you can work closely with our team to determine if an issue is already on our advocacy agenda or needs to be included. Adding your voice to the work we're already doing is a great way to amplify your impact on an issue.

Here are just a few examples of the successes we've achieved for the profession at the state level:

- ✓ Established a requirement that public buildings be designed and built to a recognized standard (LEED, Green Globes, etc.). (2011)
- ✓ Reduced the annual cost to renew one's architectural license by \$200/year. (2015)
- ✓ The addition of a licensed, registered architect and TxA member to the Texas School Safety Center's board of directors. (2019)
- ✓ Shortened the statute of repose, reducing the time an architect, contractor, engineer, interior designer, or landscape architect can be sued for an alleged project defect from 10 years to eight years. (2021)

Lawmakers and regulators want to hear from their constituents when making decisions. TxA can help you craft messages and engage with lawmakers. Telling your story and sharing your concerns as an architect is meaningful. In addition to talking with legislators, advocacy happens at the state level through state agencies, departments, boards, and commissions. TxA meets and works with these entities regularly. And, as appropriate, we collaborate with other professional organizations who share our concerns.

Local Advocacy

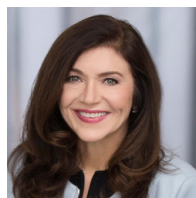
In Texas we are fortunate to have several large communities that have active advocacy efforts at the city and county level. These public policy committees work to address architects concerns at the local level. But communities of all sizes need your input! Even if a formal structure doesn't exist within your AIA chapter, you have an opportunity to serve as a community leader and influence the development of policies and decisions. Attend local town halls or meet with local officials — there are many ways to raise awareness of issues and provide assistance.

Whether we are talking about national, state, or local advocacy — we are all in it together. While the priorities may vary from time to time, we are all AIA and our utmost concern is always protecting the practice of architecture, serving the needs of members, and working to achieve our shared missions.

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