

Press Release

For Immediate Release
January 4, 2013

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2013 AIA President Mickey Jacob, FAIA Urges Congress to Help Communities Damaged by Hurricane Sandy

Tallahassee, FL – Hillsborough County architect, former AIA (American Institute of Architects) Florida President and 2013 AIA National President, Mickey Jacob, FAIA has submitted the letter below in order to encourage the House to pass legislation to help communities recover from Hurricane Sandy and make the Northeast region better equipped for future natural disasters.

Florida Architects are ready to respond to disaster relief and understand the urgent need for recovery in the aftermath of Sandy. Currently 500 AIA Florida members in the Florida/Caribbean region are trained to provide assistance in rebuilding areas devastated by natural disasters.

Michael Lingerfelt, FAIA, LEED AP, former AIA Florida president of Orlando, FL has trained more than 1,000 architects across the nation through the Safety Assessment Program. Most recently, Lingerfelt provided this training to 150 architects in New Jersey so that they could assist in Hurricane Sandy relief efforts.

After participating in the course, architects can use their skills to design a community that is disaster resilient.

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Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the more than 80,000 members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), I am writing to urge the House to pass legislation to help communities recover from Hurricane Sandy and make the Northeast region more resilient to future natural disasters.

Today, hundreds of architects and their fellow design and construction professionals are working across the affected region to help their neighbors rebuild, even as they, too, confront the effects of the storm on their homes and businesses. However, they cannot do it alone. Federal support for the recovery process is vital to ensure that damaged communities are rebuilt in the most effective and responsible way.

As the House deliberates ways to provide support for the rebuilding effort, the AIA urges you to consider several key objectives:

- **Promote the redevelopment of affordable housing.** There is an adage that disasters do not cause new social and economic problems, but rather expose and magnify problems that were already there. Much of the Northeast region lacked affordable housing options before the storm and, tragically, many of the affordable neighborhoods that did exist were the hardest hit by Sandy. Existing programs such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and the New Markets Tax Credit should be leveraged to provide relief to people who need it most.
- **Rebuild critical infrastructure to higher standards.** Simply replacing what was lost will only sow the seeds of future disasters. Hurricane Sandy highlighted unnecessary vulnerabilities in the region's buildings and infrastructure. Congress must help resolve these issues by providing supplemental access to long-term capital through programs such as Community Development Block Grants, and a special allocation of private activity Hurricane Sandy Recovery Bonds. In an economic climate that remains difficult for the design and construction industry, providing better access to capital can enable the private sector to design communities to improve the quality of life of their citizens and be better prepared to face natural disasters in the future.
- **Preserve historic buildings that can be saved.** Repairing damaged historic buildings can benefit the recovery in several ways if they are repurposed rather than demolished and replaced. For the government, it can be less of a drain on economic and material resources. For the community, it can preserve familiar landmarks and cultural treasures. Enhancing the Rehabilitation Tax Credit in the disaster zone is a common-sense incentive to help achieve this goal.

Like all Americans, AIA members are committed to help the recovery process in any way they can. As designers of the communities we call home, we feel a special obligation to not only repair what was damaged, but to plan and design our communities to be built back better and stronger.

That is why the AIA urges the House to act without delay to provide communities affected by Hurricane Sandy the resources so desperately needed to recover, plan, design and rebuild.

Sincerely,

Mickey Jacob, FAIA

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The Florida Association of the American Institute of Architects, headquartered in Tallahassee, represents the interests of more than 3,200 members in Florida. Members adhere to a code of

ethics and professional conduct that assures the client, the public, and colleagues of an AIA-member architect's dedication to the highest standards in professional practice.