



STATE OF WASHINGTON

STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL

1500 Jefferson Street SE • P.O. Box 41449 • Olympia, Washington 98504
(360) 407-9280 • fax (360) 586-5366 • e-mail sbcc@ga.wa.gov • www.ga.wa.gov/sbcc

February 4, 2013

Senator Roach and Members of the Government Operations Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments on SB 5378, creating a 6 year building code adoption cycle. The Washington State Building Code Council recognizes it is the legislature's prerogative to establish the policy by which the Building and Construction Codes are amended in the State of Washington. As such, we are taking a neutral position on this legislation.

The State Building Code Council (SBCC) provides independent analysis and objective advice to the Legislature and the Governor's Office on state building code issues. The SBCC establishes the minimum building, mechanical, fire, plumbing and energy code requirements necessary to promote the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state of Washington by reviewing, developing and adopting the state building code.

The SBCC includes 15 members appointed by the Governor, four legislative ex-officio members appointed by each caucus, and an ex-officio member from the Department of Labor and Industries electrical section. The SBCC appoints over 100 volunteers to technical advisory groups to review the codes. All rules adopted by the SBCC must sit through a legislative session prior to enactment and are subject to change by the legislature.

The purpose of the codes is straightforward. To be certain that buildings constructed in Washington State are safe for their occupants and the community in which they are built. The International Codes are adopted on three-year cycles and the Washington State Building Code Council then begins a process of modification of those codes to accommodate the construction and economic interests that are unique to the State of Washington. For the base codes, plumbing, electric, residential etc., the majority of requested modifications come from within the engineering, design, and construction, industries and from the city and county professionals who must interpret the codes.

Before making any change to the cycle, the Legislature should consider the following:

- Since model code amendments are specifically annotated in subsequent editions the "out of cycle" changes could both easily be overlooked and difficult to track.
- National "*Significant Changes*" and "*Code Commentary*" guide publications used by many would be only partially applicable.
- Certification and training programs would have to be specifically modified for in-state use.
- Test standards for new and existing building products may not be valid.
- Incremental steps to meet state and federal mandates for energy efficiency would need to be steeper.
- Construction technologies and standards, along with society's expectations for safety, energy efficiency and cost effectiveness, will advance at an increasing, not decreasing pace. This is true in virtually every aspect of commerce.
- Washington State codes will fall behind the nation to a degree that eventual catch-up will be more, perhaps prohibitively costly in both financial and political terms;
- Construction materials manufacturers will not be willing to support Washington with out-of-date products that the rest of the nation will have obsoleted. Builders will be able to buy only products that conform to more advanced national standards, regardless of less advanced Washington State codes;
- The greatest part of Washington State Codes are taken directly from the ICC model codes, which are revised every three years. It makes sense to take advantage of the knowledge development that takes place in that process.

We have just completed the adoption of the latest International codes and look forward to engaging the stakeholders in the process to make adjustments to our process.

Sincerely

Ray Allshouse
WSBCC Chair

John Chelminiak
WSBCC Legislative Committee Chair