

FAQ ON AIA STATEMENT ON CLIMATE

1. *Why is the AIA making a statement on this issue? What does climate change have to do with architects and their practice?*

The statement is consistent with the values that the AIA has expressed in its public policies, as well as in its February 2 statement of values. As the statement notes, buildings and the built environment have a large impact on the environment, which means that the profession of architecture plays a big role in the environment. Indeed, 75 percent of AIA members surveyed last September felt the issue of climate change was either “Very Important” or “Important.”

2. *Architects are not climate scientists. We need to stay out of this debate.*

The AIA does not evaluate or analyze scientific data about the climate. But it does listen to and respects the views of not only 98 percent of climate scientists, but also the business community, the military, federal government agencies and most nations in the world who all agree that man-made climate change is happening. Just as we would hope that non-architects would listen to the expertise of architects on design matters, so too should architects listen to the experts on climate.

3. *Climate change is a hoax. The AIA needs to stop toeing the liberal party line.*

We understand that there is a diversity of opinion on this issue, but we also know that architects can play a major role in cutting carbon production by how they design the built environment. That’s one of the reasons we focused the statement not just on climate challenges, but on the strong business case for sustainable design and real threats to infrastructure.

4. *How was this statement developed? Were members involved?*

The climate change principles statement was developed - based on our existing policy and position statements - by an internal team that included subject matter experts, members of the advocacy and communications teams and senior leadership staff. The draft statement was then shared for feedback with a broad and diverse group of architects representing several AIA National and component member groups. It was also reviewed by the AIA Board of Directors, AIA EVP and CEO Robert Ivy, FAIA; AIA 2017 President Tom Vonier, FAIA and 2018 AIA President-Elect Carl Elefante, FAIA.

5. *How does the climate change principles statement relate to the Climate Change Commentary referred to in the press release?*

The climate change principles statement is a broad statement of the Institute’s position on the roles and responsibilities of our profession in combatting climate change. It is one of a number of values that we have articulated in our global commitment to advancing the quality of life and protecting the public’s health, safety, and welfare. The Climate Change Mitigation Commentary was developed by the AIA’s Energy Leadership Group and adopted as a commentary to AIA’s AIA Public Policies and Position Statements Related to Sustainability. The specific cite: Category II:

The Practice, Public Policy IIC: Architects Are Environmentally Responsible, Position Statements 1-6, found here: <http://aia.org/advocacy/publicpolicy/index.htm>]. It is a specific call to action for architects to advance energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment through practice, education, and policy-making.

6. *This statement is weak. It doesn't even mention all the terrible things that the Trump Administration is doing to the environment.*

This statement is not a reaction to any one specific policy proposal. It is a broader statement of the Institute's beliefs about the environmental and architectural challenges before us. We are indeed active in standing up for and defending policies that impact the sustainability of the built environment. For the last 5 years, for example, we've led a coalition of nearly 1000 organizations and businesses – including the top environmental groups in the nation – in opposing efforts to repeal sustainability standards for federal buildings. We spearheaded an effort for nearly 800 firms to write to the new EPA Administrator to protect key sustainability programs. And we have, with our allies, led efforts to block rollbacks in model energy codes. If you want to get more involved in these efforts, you can- by joining the AIA's Legislative Action Network. And you can gain access to the many resources we have on this issue at (link)

7. *Why doesn't the AIA speak up about other important environmental issues? (Drilling/fracking/endangered species/etc.)*

The AIA is a respected, credible advocacy voice in Washington and in state capitols when it speaks to issues that directly affect the built environment and on which architects have unique knowledge and expertise. That's why we focus our sustainability advocacy on issues that directly impact the design of buildings and communities. While there are certainly many other issues that touch on the environment, we are most effective when we speak to architectural scope.

8. *Words are cheap. What is the AIA doing about sustainability?*

A lot! Here's a list of just some of our activities:

- 2030 Commitment program of designing new and major renovation projects to reach carbon neutrality by the year 2030
- Working with the National Resilience Institute on research focused on adaptation to climate change
- Serving as a resource for the 100 Resilient Cities
- The recent publication of the Disaster Assistance Handbook to help architects respond to natural and man-made disasters in their area
- Building education around energy, resilience, design and health and materials transparency education curriculum
- Recognizing exceptional projects in the Committee on the Environment Top Ten awards program for architecture and students

- Publishing numerous resources across our four sustainability initiatives, COTE, building science, community design and social equity
- Hosting community charrettes for sustainability, resilience and equity

9. *How did the AIA choose the sustainability topics of focus?*

The AIA brought in a Resident Fellow in 2012 to help AIA identify the most important areas of focus in sustainability based on AIA policy, past accomplishments, current programs and industry need. The Fellow, along with staff and an expert advisory group, published the Sustainable Leadership Opportunity Scan (LINK) in 2013, framing the four pillars of sustainability for AIA. They include core areas of which architects impact directly in their day-to-day practice: Energy and Materials, along with two emerging areas where architects play a major role along with other leading professions: Design & Health and Resilience.

10. *Why hasn't the AIA spoken out against the Trump action on [the Muslim ban, border wall, statements about the media, etc.]?*

The climate statement is based upon the AIA's public policies and position statements, which are reviewed and approved by the Board after consultation with members, as well as upon the values statement we issued in early February. The AIA will not hesitate to speak out when issues arise that directly impact the practice of architecture and the built environment. For example, the AIA has already weighed in on the Administration's proposed immigration policies and the Administration's proposed budget.

11. *Isn't this just a way for the AIA to try to make amends for its post-election press release?*

The post-election press release stated that AIA would work to advocate for its members and the profession to and with the new Administration. In addition, the members of AIA have asked the organization to be a bold leader. AIA expressed our statement of its values in early February. Our commitment to sustainability, resilience, social infrastructure and a better built environment is constant. This statement on climate reflects those values.

12. *I'm a member and this doesn't represent my opinion about climate change. You are supposed to speak for all members, not just the most vocal/liberal/conservative etc.*

AIA is a professional society that represents a diverse membership. Our members hold a wide variety of beliefs about many things. In this case, we are speaking to our values as an organization as identified by our members, particularly through our Institute policies and biennial federal Call for Issues. We recognize that some members may not agree with the stands that AIA takes now or in the future. But also know that all members have the ability to shape the AIA's policies and positions. One way to do so is by joining the AIA's Legislative Action Network. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/79FFP36>

13. *The AIA needs to stay out of politics. I don't like the ideology you're espousing.*

The AIA supports government policies that help advance the profession. We are a bi-partisan organization, which means that we work with both parties. At times, that means the AIA will find itself in agreement with policymakers of one party or the other. Other times it means we oppose a position espoused by one of the parties. In many instances the AIA has succeeded in advocating for architects by identifying issues upon which both sides can agree. But our test of whether to take a stand on an issue is not which party supports it; our test is whether it helps to advance our values as expressed by our Public Policies.

14. *How is AIA acting globally on climate change?*

AIA participates in International Union of Architects (UIA), a global federation of national associations of architects, to address universal architectural issues across borders including climate change mitigation and adaptation. AIA also partners with individual architectural associations and organization on discrete projects and initiatives. Additionally, we participate in global conferences that address these topics, such as Habitat III held in Quito, Ecuador in 2016, as opportunities arise.