

## **INASLA Government Affairs Mid-Year Update**

By Jonathon Geels, Government Affairs Committee Chair

The Indiana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, on behalf of its members, regularly engages in a number of outreach efforts to policymakers at all levels of government to raise awareness of the profession and advocate for policies that benefit its members. Over the last 5 years, INASLA Government Affairs chapter engagement has increased 300%. This trend shows a greater understanding of the importance of chapter advocacy as well as effectiveness in chapter communication. As landscape architects navigate continual scope of practice and licensure threats, this engagement will be necessary to maintain and grow the profession.

### **Lobbyist**

In 2018, INASLA hired lobbyist [Michael Leppert](#), the Director of Public Affairs from Krieg DeVault. While providing weekly updates during the short legislative session, Michael was also instrumental in helping raise the profile of Indiana Landscape Architects by setting up important testimony for the chapter, notably [House Bill 1096](#), which would have barred local authorities from imposing more stringent run-off requirements than what is authorized in the Indiana Code. Additionally, INASLA through Krieg DeVault provided support for IN-AIA's changes to license testing requirements allowing students to begin the testing process, which brought the architects more in line with the landscape architecture language. Additionally, Michael provided important oversight of INASLA's ReThink 65/70 coalition participating, helping with our letter of support to several local and state governmental agencies.

Engaged for a three year cycle, Michael and his team will help Indiana form an informal policymaker Caucus within the Indiana Legislature. These policymakers would be critical in fending off future licensure attacks, such as the one faced by the 2015 Job Creation Committee. To do this, several in-district meetings are currently being arranged around the state to connect landscape architects and their state level legislators. The end goal is to have between 10 and 15 state policymakers attend the INASLA Annual Meeting in September.

These important efforts bolster the chapter's government affairs progress and strengthen the standing of the profession in Indiana. The economic gains for landscape architects and their firms from such an effort will be felt throughout the state.

### **Midwest Joint Licensure Caucus:**

In response to the increasing number of licensure threats across the nation, especially those in states neighboring Indiana, INASLA formed the Midwest Joint Licensure Caucus. Every quarter, chapter leaders from Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin meet to discuss upcoming landscape architecture licensure opportunities and challenges within their state. The most recent Caucus meeting saw relatively few serious concerns, though several smaller legislative changes, state to state compacts and licensure rule changes that might weaken the laws were noted. Illinois' transition from a Title Act to a Practice Act still looms large, as they are the only state in the region without a Practice Act and frequently come up in legislative conversations. As they continue that transition, adjacent chapters will remain engaged to offer assistance where needed, such with as letters of support. The next meeting will be in Philadelphia, during the National Annual Meeting and Expo.

### **Advocacy Day**

Last April, nearly 200 ASLA leaders and students from chapters around the country flocked to Washington, D.C., for [ASLA Advocacy Day 2018](#). The annual Advocacy Day fly-in and the full day of legislative meetings on Capitol Hill that comes with it, is partnered with the Mid-Year Chapter Presidents Council and Board of Trustees meeting. Over the last several years, INASLA has prioritized sending students with chapter advocates to meet with their legislators on Capitol Hill to talk about landscape architecture related priorities. INASLA is fortunate to have two nationally ranked programs within the state and the students have played an important role in connecting the various aspects of the profession. This year, advocates educated their policy makers on how landscape architects have the education, training, skills, and experience to assist all communities on three key pieces of legislation: the Living Shorelines Act, the Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act, and the Environmental Justice Act. These new focus pieces of legislation come on the heels of much success ASLA has had in advocating for transportation, park, and community infrastructure funding.

ASLA advocates urged their U.S. senators and members of the House of Representatives to support legislation to create more living shorelines in coastal communities, to call for more green infrastructure projects to address stormwater management, and to promote community engagement in underserved communities. Specifically, advocates urged co-sponsorship of [H.R. 4525, the Living Shorelines Act](#), which would promote the use of natural infrastructure to help restore and protect coastal shorelines from erosion, increased flooding, and sea-level rise.

ASLA advocates also urged support for the [Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act](#), a bill that promotes the use of green infrastructure projects under the integrated municipal stormwater and wastewater planning framework. It also creates an Office of the Municipal Ombudsman within the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of the Administrator, which would help provide technical assistance to municipalities to comply with federal water pollution and safe drinking water laws. In October 2017, this bill passed the full U.S. Senate by unanimous consent. However, the House version of the bill has not had any movement, and ASLA is working to move the bill through the legislative process.

New to ASLA's federal legislative agenda is environmental justice legislation. ASLA has endorsed the [Environmental Justice Act of 2017 \(H.R. 4114, S. 1996\)](#), which would require federal agencies to address environmental justice and require the consideration of the impacts of projects on underserved communities during the permitting process. During their congressional meetings, landscape architects highlighted their environmental justice work in communities across the country and urged legislators to cosponsor the legislation.

ASLA advocates felt confident that their legislators understood the role of landscape architects in designing and planning critical infrastructure projects that will help make all communities healthy and resilient and that ASLA's legislative agenda will assist them in continuing this important work.

### **Licensure Summit**

In an effort to continue to grow and improve upon ASLA's defense efforts against licensure threats, ASLA and the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB) co-hosted for the first time a joint Licensure Summit. The Licensure Summit was held June 22-24, 2018, in Columbus, Ohio, and focused on building effective relationships between ASLA chapters and state licensing boards to enhance licensure education and defense. Participants included nearly 90 individuals representing over 40 states and Council of Landscape Architectural Board jurisdictions.

While ASLA staff provided an update on state and federal government affairs activities and resources, professional licensure was the main focus for the entire summit. States have addressed licensure reform through proposals focused on interstate compacts for temporary licensure, "Right to Earn a Living" acts (or similar versions thereof), formal reviews of licensed occupations in the state, and the direct deregulation of landscape architecture. The Summit opened with a debrief on the 2018 state legislative session and its unprecedented efforts to reform occupational licensure through these various methods. Chapters shared their 2018 experiences, helping better demonstrate how pervasive these battles have been. Afterwards, summit participants were joined by a Columbus City Councilwoman and two city council staff members for a site tour of the award-winning Scioto River Greenways Project.

Ohio State Representative Tim Schaffer opened the afternoon session with a keynote address that focused on how to effectively engage with state lawmakers and provided remarks on the nationwide trend of occupational licensing reform. In one of the most engaging segments of the Summit, the Ohio Chapter's lobbyist shared tips and techniques in preparing and delivering persuasive testimony, followed by a mock committee hearing. INASLA helped lead the mock hearing, serving as "committee chair" and lending insights on engaging policymakers and staying on message.

Completing the afternoon was a breakout session on Landscape Architecture Month Resolutions, which INASLA has had ample experience in producing the last several years. Our chapter has used the enactment of landscape architecture resolutions and proclamations at all levels (from Governor and Mayoral proclamations to City Council Resolutions) for advocacy, education, and building awareness of the profession.

On the last day of the Summit, participants rotated through three workshops:

1. Planning Creative Education and Advocacy Programs,

2. Building Effective Board/Chapter Relations
3. Responding to Legislative Inquiries.

Each of the workshops comprised of applicable case studies presented by Summit participants sharing their chapter/board best practices and offered insightful tips. While INASLA and the Indiana Professional Licensure (IPLA) Board Members currently have a good relationship, a number of ways were discussed to help strengthen participation. These included regular attendance at both Executive Committee and IPLA Arch./L.A. Board Meetings, celebrating new landscape architecture licenses with a ceremony, among others.