

ASID RESIGNATIONS

-GROUP ONE-

December 19, 2008

Michael Alin, Executive Director
The American Society of Interior Designers
608 Massachusetts Ave., NE
Washington, D.C., 20002

Dear Mr. Alin:

Over the last several years, we have watched as ASID has recklessly spent our dues and MANDATORY legislative assessments on a failed policy falsely proclaiming to “raise the level of the profession” and to cull what *you* have decided are the “real designers” from those not following the path you dictate. The legislation you support has requirements so restrictive that most designers would not be able to comply and will therefore be denied the right to practice.

Over and over... we have watched as ASID’s president, members and board repeatedly mislead their own ASID colleagues about the EFFECT of legislation on our right to practice, while currying support from the very designers who would be put out of business by your legislative actions. And we have listened as Allied Members were described as the “Cash Cows” of the organization – too stupid to understand that we were being used to fund our own demise.

Over and over... we have watched as ASID betrayed its own ethics to push its own agenda – an ego-driven agenda that has the potential to destroy more than half of its own membership.

Over and over... we have listened as ASID members said sweetly, “We’re not trying to put you out of business.” [Subtext: as long as you forego your practice to go back to school for at least 2 years, do a *supervised* internship with an NCIDQ certified designer – if you can *find* one who also happens to be hiring – and intern from two to five years while being paid virtually nothing; then if you have any money left, pay about \$2000 to take step workshops, purchase study materials, and take and pass the NCIDQ test (which is rarely passed on the first attempt), and then prove to the satisfaction of your own competitors that you actually are a designer, and comply with any regulations they happen to write.] But nobody’s trying to put you out of business; after all, there’s grandfathering. And from what we’ve seen of the way “grandfathering” is often written into the legislation, that’s just as bogus a claim as the rest of the pro-legislation argument.

Legislators have told us that representatives (either ASID and/or IIDA members) have misrepresented the content, objectives and design support for their legislation while governors of four states have clearly understood it to be anticompetitive and protective.

In states where practice acts have been enacted, designers have suffered terribly – persecuted for what they have done successfully for years, sustaining huge fines and legal fees for miniscule “infractions” and in some cases, bankrupted and driven out of the state in order to earn a living.

Florida designers bear witness to the travesty of your actions, and we hear more and more from them every day. The disgraceful behavior of Florida ASID members who deliberately work to expose and report their own members, as well as others, and help to put them out of business tells us what we need to know about ASID as an organization and about how legislation really works to destroy designers' rights to practice. And Florida is not the only state where this happens or has happened: try Alabama, Texas, New Mexico, Connecticut and others.

There are estimated to be between 200,000¹ and 400,000 interior designers in practice in the U.S. today. ASID claims membership of only about 20,000 practicing designers, the majority of whom don't even care about "raising the level of the profession". Many are not even aware of your legislative agenda. They just want to practice design successfully as they always have.

We have personally spoken to Allied designers all across the country, and have found the vast majority to be opposed to your actions. As we've said before: the only designers who benefit from your tactics are the so-called professional designers who have passed the NCIDQ – and those are few and far between.

You do not represent *independent* designers as you have claimed, hence the title *independent*. They don't want ASID's interference in their right to practice, and have told us that they resent ASID's efforts to dictate policy in which they have no say. Even ASID members are not welcome to disagree with your policies as the invitation to the Arkansas conference clearly shows, where attendees were carefully vetted to make sure that there would be no discordant voices.

ASID HAS NO RIGHT AND NO MANDATE TO DICTATE TO HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DESIGNERS ALL ACROSS THIS COUNTY WHO WILL BE ALLOWED TO PRACTICE AND WHO WILL NOT. YOUR LEGISLATION IS BEING DEFEATED BECAUSE DESIGNERS DO NOT SUPPORT YOUR OBJECTIVES.

It is clear to us that ASID no longer advocates for all of its members. This is illustrated in the make-up of the board which is ponderously commercial, in the membership of your pro-legislation coalitions across the country, where the majority are often commercial designers and in your undue influence in the schools, where students are pushed toward architectural/commercial design and where residential design gets short shrift. Students have told us that ASID has misled them, pushing them into commercial/architectural design on the premise that jobs at the commercial or architectural firms would be awaiting them when they graduate, and that ASID would help them get those jobs.

Even before the economic downturn, commercial jobs were very hard to come by – by ASID's own statistics, only 15% of the market - and the few students who manage to land those jobs do so without ASID's promised-but too often **undelivered** assistance. Many students, unable to secure those jobs have wound up selling commercial furniture and other commercial products. And most residential designers cannot hire them, as designers who have, have told us that they can draft, but cannot do other things that are crucial to residential design.

¹ According to a survey by Interior Design Magazine as quoted in the New York Times, January 29, 1987

ASID's preferential conduct is also apparent in the way Allied Members are treated on the national website's "Find a Designer" page, where potential clients searching for referrals are offered a choice of "Show Professionals Only" (listed as the default) vs. "Show All Practitioners" which they have to search for [note: this appears to just have been changed]. This is insulting and clearly shows a bias toward "professional" members, which is especially unjustifiable considering that many so-called "Professional" designers have never passed the NCIDQ test and have just been allowed in. Allied Members pay the majority of dues and mandatory legislation fees, are no less professional in their work, and do not deserve a lesser marketing effort than any other members.

Additionally, by promoting its single-entry method as the one true path to design, ASID has created a rift between practicing designers and those who take ASID's EEE path, with the younger designers evincing rudely worded disrespect for their more experienced elders – a situation which is not conducive to job creation.

Interior Design is a creative field. Yet ASID is determined to legislate creativity out of it by restricting the many paths of entry into the field that have nurtured that creativity and vision for years, producing brilliant designers - down to one path that is engineered to produce – engineers.

In a failing economy such as this, ASID should be using all its resources to support and market designers, not to destroy them through legislation. And make no mistake, we completely understand your actions and your intent.

We are ashamed and deeply disappointed by this organization. We can no longer support a Society that deliberately destroys its own membership and endangers the future of design and designers in its unending desire for power and dominance. And because of your exclusive policies, we know there is no hope of changing the trajectory of your actions.

ASID had a slogan: PROTECTING YOUR RIGHT TO PRACTICE. You are, in fact, subverting your own *raison d'être* by deliberately trying to destroy our right to practice. And that is unethical, unconscionable and unacceptable.

And so we are resigning.

Jacqueline Bazaar, #1533586, Pennsylvania

Margaret H. Benson, #1504190, Texas

Gayle Beyer, #1519494, Colorado

Loraine Brown, #1250453, Georgia

Christine Colman, #1534167, Washington

Ellen Fernandez, #1239917, Maryland

Diane Foreman, #61436, Oregon

Debbie Gersh, #1485135, Texas

Noreen Dunn Gottfried, #1502827, Pennsylvania

Carol Gumpert, 1550669, California

Karen K. Hartley, #75601, Georgia

Continued below

Nancy Hartwig, #1559067, Arizona
Henrietta Heisler, #1859365, Pennsylvania
Elizabeth Kauermann, #97269, Pennsylvania
Nancy Phillips Leroy, #1231856, Pennsylvania
Christie Meehan, #1201627, Pennsylvania
Tonya Morrison, 1487732, Pennsylvania
Jayne Rosen, #78935, Pennsylvania
Rebecca Ruediger, #1250458, Missouri
Carly Sax, #1500172, Illinois
Anne-Marie H. Schimenti, #1504255, Florida
June Shea, #1486996, Virginia
Nadia T. Tanita, #1542001, Hawaii
Terri Temple, #18099, Connecticut
Mary Sue B. Wiedmer, #1215131, Pennsylvania

Resigned earlier this year for the above reasons:

Janice Onsa, Pennsylvania, former Allied Member
Diane Plesnet, Oregon CMKBD, CID #5818, C.A.P.S., former ASID

cc: Bruce J. Brigham, President
Board of Directors:
Bruce Goff
Charrisse Johnston
Doug Hartsell
Lisa Henry
Mary G. Knopf
Rachelle Schoessler Lynn
Stephanie Clemons
Sybil J.B. Van Dijs