

Issue Brief

AIA Issue Position and Analysis

AIA POSITION

The American Institute of Architects supports legislation to provide student debt relief to graduating architecture students who contribute volunteer design work in underserved communities.

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Help Young Architects Serve Their Communities Support the National Design Services Act.

The National Design Services Act (NDSA), previously introduced in both the 113th and 114th Congresses, would enable recent architecture graduates to work with non-profit community design centers in exchange for student debt relief. This will contribute to the economic revitalization of underserved communities while relieving financial burdens on the next generation of architects.

BACKGROUND

Architecture students are graduating with extremely high loan balances, forcing many to leave the profession before completing the path to licensure. This deprives the country of the professionals who will design and retrofit the next generation of high performing buildings. Without a pool of qualified architects to design buildings, those projects will not move forward, stifling economic development.

A 2012 poll of hundreds of architecture school graduates by the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) revealed the extent of the problem. Respondents reported an average of \$40,000 in debt after graduation, as well as unexpected costs specific to their architectural training. These costs included more than \$1,000 annually on materials for project submissions and \$800 on text books and technology, accounting for a total of \$1,500 a year in additional accumulated debt in addition to tuition expenses.

The Federal government has provided student loan assistance for medical, legal and veterinary school graduates who work in underserved areas. Architecture graduates can provide design work to help underserved communities with much needed public projects. This work will put economy-boosting redevelopment plans, community centers, historic rehabilitations, and other projects within reach for cash strapped localities.

By enacting the National Design Services Act, Congress can help accelerate economic growth in the design and construction industry and move valuable public projects forward by including architecture school graduates in the same kinds of programs that offer other professional graduates loan assistance if they donate their services to communities in need.

