



# Interior Design Legislation



WHAT IS AT STAKE AND  
WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU

# What is a professional interior designer?

A professional interior designer is qualified by education, experience and examination to enhance the function, safety and quality of interior spaces. Professional interior designers combine critical and creative thinking, and knowledge of building codes, communication and technology, for the purposes of improving quality of life, increasing productivity and protecting the health, safety and welfare of those who occupy the spaces they design.



# What is interior design legislation?

States legally recognize the interior design profession through legislation that establishes minimum standards of qualification that must be met to become registered in the state. Through these established standards, interior design legislation protects and benefits public health, safety and welfare. In addition to establishing standards of minimum competency for the profession, interior design laws legally recognize interior design as a profession and often define its scope of practice.

Professional registration or licensure laws do not say who provides “good design” or “bad design.” This is a subjective decision that can only be made by a client. Instead, professional regulations set a minimum level of competencies required to safely practice a profession.

Generally, there are two types of interior design legislation: **title acts** (registration or certification), which set standards for the use of a certain title but do not prevent anyone from practicing interior design; and **practice acts** (licensure), which require that professionals obtain a state license to offer interior design services.

## Why should interior designers be registered or licensed?

The answer is simple: Every decision an interior designer makes affects life safety and quality of life. Legal recognition establishes enforceable standards of minimum competency and ensures that only qualified individuals design interior spaces or represent themselves as having the qualifications to do so.

Further, by providing legal definitions of the scope of interior design services and who may refer to themselves as a “registered [certified] interior designer,” legislation helps consumers differentiate the responsibilities and services of each of the design professions, helping them choose the appropriate professional for their projects, and bringing the benefit of more open competition to the design process.

# Why does it matter to me?

## **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

One result of the increased focus on interior design fueled by popular media is an influx of untrained “interior designers” in the marketplace. In states without interior design laws, there are no professional qualifications for an individual to practice interior design. In such cases, the public health, safety and welfare is in jeopardy, as an unqualified individual may make decisions that put lives at risk.

## **RIGHT TO PRACTICE/LOSS OF WORK**

If you live in a state without an interior design title act or practice act, interior design is not a legally recognized profession and you may, therefore, be precluded from practicing to your fullest capabilities or bidding on certain state projects even though you have formal interior design education, experience and have passed the NCIDQ exam.

In addition, without a legal definition of interior design and a defined scope of practice, interior designers run the risk of losing their ability to provide certain services through the regulation of other design professions. This means loss of work for interior designers.

## **ABILITY TO PRACTICE ACROSS STATE LINES**

Given the mobility and global nature of businesses today, interior designers are unlikely to practice in the same city or state throughout their careers. The ability of interior designers to work on a project across state lines or to move their business from state to state depends on establishing a standard scope of practice and professional qualifications for interior designers.

You can ease your ability to practice across state lines by ensuring that you have at least two years of interior design education and have passed the NCIDQ exam, even if the state where you currently do business does not require it.



## What can you do?

Involvement in the legislative process is a vital part of your role as a professional. Take advantage of the following simple steps to promote your profession and its benefits to the public:

- » **Learn about the issues.** Find out how issues, such as building permits and architectural statutes, affect interior design in your state.
- » **Maximize your efforts.** Join your state's interior design legislative coalition, and educate and encourage others in your chapter to join you in advancing the cause. The more people who are active on an issue, the sooner the goal will be accomplished.
- » **Contact your legislators.** Educate your state legislators about the importance of legally recognizing the interior design profession.
- » **Take advantage of the many resources available to you.**
  - Contact your chapter or state interior design legislative coalition to find out how to get involved.
  - Take advantage of ASID services. Visit the Web site, [www.asid.org](http://www.asid.org), or e-mail [gpa@asid.org](mailto:gpa@asid.org) for information on legislative issues and political action.

CONTACT THE ASID GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS TEAM AT  
(202) 546-3480 OR [GPA@ASID.ORG](mailto:gpa@asid.org) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

ASID is a community of people — designers, industry representatives, educators and students — committed to interior design. Through education, knowledge sharing, advocacy, community building and outreach, the Society strives to advance the interior design profession and, in the process, to demonstrate and celebrate the power of design to positively change people's lives. Its more than 38,000 members engage in a variety of professional programs and activities through a network of 48 chapters throughout the United States and Canada.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ASID, VISIT [WWW.ASID.ORG](http://WWW.ASID.ORG).**



608 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., NE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20002-6006  
**T:** (202) 546 3480  
**F:** (202) 546 3240  
**W:** ASID.ORG