

School Construction Legislation

DHI AND THE FOUNDATION WILL BE working together to monitor legislation at both the federal and state level and report back to the DHI membership and supporters of the Foundation on a regular basis on areas of interest.

Several pieces of legislation in both the House and the Senate focus on providing federal support for school building improvements. I will outline one particular bill of interest that is working its way through Congress.

The House passed H.R. 3221, the High Performance Green School Buildings Act in July 2009, authorizing federal funds to be paid directly to local school districts for school repair, renovation and modernization of public schools, including early learning facilities and charter schools. The mandate is to make K-12 schools safe, healthy, high-performing, and technologically up-to-date.

The language from this bill was eventually incorporated into the Student Aid & Fiscal Responsibility Act. This bill passed the full House in late September of 2009. This bill is part of a reconciliation bill—meaning that money needs to be saved on one side of the ledger to pay for a new program expense on the other side. The savings would come from proposed changes in the student loan industry. This bill allocates \$4 billion in student loan savings to be used for this program.

The Senate’s version of this legislation, the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, is also expected to include funding for school renovation, repair, modernization and construction, although no action has been taken to date.

Whereas the House version was based on a formula that would appropriate smaller amounts of money across a large population of schools, the Senate version goes in a different direction in regards to how the money would be appropriated.

The House version will distribute money based on each district and state’s share of federal Title 1 dollars—financial assistance to schools with high numbers or high percentages of poor children to

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help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. School districts that receive Title 1 money WILL receive money under the version the House is proposing for resource allocation.

The Senate version would incorporate a competitive bid process that would require the school district to match the amount of the grant authorized to each school.

The House would include a two-year, formula-based award mechanism, while the Senate bill is designed as a five-year, competitive grant program.

In a separate piece of legislation, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$700M for the same purpose of school renovation and construction. This language is part of the Labor, Health & Human Services and education Appropriations bill passed before the August recess. Debates still need to be scheduled for FY10 Appropriations legislation.

Legislation that advances the construction or renovation of schools is a good thing in terms of the increased life safety and security a modern structure can provide. We need to help continually frame the picture of the role this industry plays in providing a safe learning environment.

The Door and Hardware Institute can, and will, lobby on behalf of its membership. DHI will lead certain efforts or will join with other associations that share a common interest on issues that are important to the industry.

The Foundation’s role is slightly different. Among other things, the Foundation can provide informational material, research and education to help legislators understand the total scope of an issue.

The Foundation is a voice for all the good that this industry is responsible for and capable of in terms of solving life safety and security issues.

When it comes to the type of school construction legislation that is being discussed in the days and months ahead, this industry should be a voice at the table, and we are working hard to ensure our voice is heard. 