

# AIA San Diego

A Chapter of The American Institute of Architects

July 22, 2009



Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA  
President  
American Institute of Architects  
1735 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20006

**SUBJ:** AIA's response to NCARB's "Security and Development" fee

Dear President Malecha,

American Institute of Architects San Diego (AIASD) respectfully requests that AIA comment on the proceedings at The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) annual meeting and conference, specifically in regards to NCARB's announcement of "a \$40 Security and Development" fee that will be applied to each division of the Architectural Registration Exam (ARE) scheduled on or after 1 October, 2009." Many emerging professionals are expressing disapproval of NCARB's handling of the fee increase, and many AIA Associates are questioning NCARB's justification of this fee increase.

Shortly after its annual meeting, NCARB quietly posted onto its website under the June 2009 news section the new fee structure. NCARB stated that the additional increase of the exam cost is a result of eight individuals caught posting exam content on the web. NCARB will need to replace the disclosed exam materials and estimates that the administrative and legal costs to do so will be \$1.4 million. NCARB claims it needs to implement this fee increase immediately in order to cover expenses. It also plans on hiring two full-time people to monitor forums and blogs for future exam violators. NCARB record holders received no prior or direct notification of its intent to raise fees. As of today's date, we believe neither state AIA components, nor local AIA chapters, nor NCARB-record holders have received information regarding the imminent fee change.

The ARE forums and blogs have been a hot bed of commentary and skepticism of NCARB's actions. Numerous threads on the ARE forum have been posted and more than 2,300 views have been registered on one forum alone. These comments express outrage, frustration, and skepticism of NCARB -- and its role in our profession. Sample forum postings include:

*"I had to choose between the June rent and my exam this month. Pretty sad."*

*"Exam fees would have (or should have at least) been reviewed when they switched to 4.0. I'm guessing they didn't review it well enough and now decided they need to charge more and are trying to cover the real reason. incompetence "*

Many out-of-work emerging professionals are taking this time to study for their exams and become licensed architects. They are honing their skills and preparing themselves for the anticipated economic upturn. The fee increases add an extra financial burden for emerging professionals that are paying back student loans, working shorter hours due to economic conditions, or unfortunately collecting unemployment. Sometimes, emerging professionals must choose between taking an exam or paying their utility bill.

Emerging professionals have reacted to this new fee increase rapidly, and an electronic petition on the Care2 website has already been formed. This petition is in favor of postponing the 20% raise for the Security and Development fee until the economy stabilizes and allowing people who show proof of unemployment related to lack of work to pay their record fees later. Emerging professionals are responding, what is AIA's response?

Part of the AIA 2008-2010 National Component Strategic Plan includes emerging professionals, their path to licensure, and their transition from Associate Members to Architect Members. On the AIA website, there is currently no response to the architectural community on the actions of NCARB. AIA consists of over 10,000 Associate members, and this group makes up a significant portion of the AIA membership numbers. As "the voice of the architectural profession," the AIA cannot remain silent on this issue. Doing so would be a gross disservice to its constituent members, all of whom rely on NCARB for either IDP, ARE, reciprocity, and more.

Our San Diego leadership believes it is AIA's responsibility to question and examine the Security and Development Fee. AIA's Associate members should be able to turn to this professional organization to represent their interests -- be it for gaining accurate information or for a unified response to an ill managed action. Otherwise, in this instance, AIA will be neither a resource to its members, nor the voice of the profession.

AIA San Diego respectfully requests that any one of the following three individuals be contacted to advise us what the National AIA Board of Directors and EVP/CEO Christine McEntee are doing or have done relative to NCARB's Security and Development fee.

Individuals to contact:

- Jean Zagrodnik, AIA, President, AIA San Diego [jean@ztarc.com](mailto:jean@ztarc.com) or 619-528-1199
- Alison Morita, Assoc AIA, Commissioner, AIA San Diego's Young Architects Commission, [amorita@a-dwrb.com](mailto:amorita@a-dwrb.com) or 619-299-6690
- Elizabeth O'Malley, Executive Director/CEO, AIA San Diego, [eomalley@aiasandiego.org](mailto:eomalley@aiasandiego.org) or 619-232-0109

To review some of the postings and commentary for emerging professionals on this issue, please visit the following links to online references:

ARE Forum:


<http://www.areforum.org/forums/forumdisplay.php?f=46>

On-line "Architectural Economy" Petition:

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/architectural-economy>

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Jean M. Zagrodnik, AIA  
President, AIA San Diego



Alison Morita, Assoc AIA  
Commissioner, AIA San Diego,  
Young Architects Commission

CC: AIA Board of Directors  
AIA California Council  
California Regional Directors  
NCARB Board of Directors  
NCARB Member Board Executive (MBE) Committee