

## 2009 Board Activities

By Dennis R. Connell, AIA, PA Board President

The board has initiated a comprehensive review and rewrite of Pennsylvania's Architects Licensure Law and regulations. We have generated a side-by-side comparison showing complementary sections of the two documents as a tool for identifying specific provisions that are not in agreement. Each board member has taken responsibility for specific sections of the act and regulations, and has performed an initial review to identify discrepancies, vague provisions, unnecessary requirements and inconsistencies with National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) policies in the model law to determine what and how to amend.

One item being addressed in this process is the timing for completion of the Intern Development Program (IDP) relative to commencing the architects registration exam. The board is suggesting that the specific provision for three years of diversified training by Interns be removed from our regulations. Since IDP is tied to completion of a specific number and variety of contact hours, the three-year time period is viewed as archaic. I believe the board will proffer a regulation that allows greater flexibility in allowing candidates to initiate the exam but not receive a license until the entire exam is passed.

The board has also proposed accepting the education and experience requirements established by NCARB's Broadly Experienced Architect Program and Foreign Educated Architects Program. Currently, the standard for assessing an application for licensure that does not meet the specific education and experience requirements for Pennsylvania is subjective. By implementing these programs as our standard, a process that applies a clear and verifiable set of criteria will be employed.

The board has recently learned that professional practice programs are becoming more common for architecture schools in Pennsylvania. In response, we have sent letters to the six accredited schools in our

state. We have offered to send a member of the board to each of these schools to provide information on the licensing requirements, process and timing. By informing our next generation of practitioners, we hope to make the road to licensure easier to travel and encourage them to pursue licensure. To date, The Pennsylvania State University accepted our offer.

Legislation to implement Mandatory Continuing Education (MCE) has not been reintroduced as of this report. However, a draft proposal is circulating and the board has been asked to respond.

At the 2008 April board meeting, a lengthy discussion was held debating specific requirements and how to avoid some pitfalls that other jurisdictions have encountered when MCE was implemented. Two specific issues were discussed:

The draft proposes successful completion of 36 hours of continuing education, with a minimum of 24 hours of health, safety and welfare education, during each license renewal cycle. The board voted to recommend a total of 24 hours with 12 hours of health, safety and wellness. This is consistent with the newly enacted requirement for Pennsylvania engineers and the majority of the jurisdictions throughout the nation. I believe that the board's

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preference is to not have a specific number of hours in the act in order to allow for the flexibility to modify the requirements. The board prefers to have the required number defined by regulation.

Since the mandated requirements regarding the number of hours of education vary greatly from one licensing jurisdiction to another, many jurisdictions are encountering problems with licensees who hold reciprocal registration. The board has proposed that the specific number of contact hours required by Pennsylvania's act apply only to architects who receive their initial license in Pennsylvania. The requirements for licensees who hold, or apply for, reciprocal licensure can be defined by regulation. This approach would allow the board to write a regulation that would accept a reciprocal licensee's base state of licensure requirement if it differs from Pennsylvania's requirement.

### Role of the Commissioner on the Board

By Basil Merenda, Director, Bureau of  
Professional and Occupational Affairs

The Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (BPOA) touches the lives of millions of Pennsylvanians each day. We protect the health, safety and welfare of the public from fraudulent and unethical practitioners by administering professional licensing to physicians and cosmetologists to accountants and funeral directors. In addition, the bureau provides administrative and legal support to 27 professional and occupational licensing boards and commissions.

As commissioner of the BPOA, I am responsible for administering the commonwealth's licensing boards, sitting as a voting member on disciplinary cases and policy matters for 25 of the 27 boards and signing all licenses issued by the BPOA.

My administrative duties include working with the deputy commissioner to make "the trains run on time." In BPOA's case, it means making sure that license renewals, applications and inquiries are properly handled

by our staff. It also involves making sure that where appropriate, reciprocal licenses requested from out-of-state individuals are properly reviewed. BPOA is also required to conduct reviews of education programs for some boards.

My duties as voting member on 25 of the 27 licensing boards are the same duties and obligations that the professional and public members have as part of their service on our licensure boards. I act as a judge, along with the other board members, on disciplinary hearings. I participate with the other board members in the drafting and enactment of regulations, rules and other policy initiatives. In addition, I have the responsibility of coordinating policy matters of all 27 boards for Governor Edward G. Rendell.

I truly believe the most important thing I can do for you is to provide you with professional service — and that is my goal.

When Governor Rendell appointed me BPOA commissioner, he told me to make BPOA and the commonwealth's 27 licensing boards more accessible, responsive and accountable to the legislature, the licensees and the public we are sworn to protect. My pledge to you is that I, as commissioner, am working to carry out Governor Rendell's charge with intelligence, vigor and effectiveness.

If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out and contact my office at any time.

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