

A PROPOSAL TO CREATE A NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

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Summary

This proposal advocates the creation of a National Academy of Environmental Design (NAED) as a part of the existing National Academies. The NAED would include members from the academic and professional elements of the design disciplines, including architecture, city and regional planning, landscape architecture, interior design, product design, and graphic design.

About the National Academies

The National Academies bring together committees of experts in areas of scientific and technological endeavor to serve “pro bono to address critical national issues and give advice to the federal government and the public.” Four organizations comprise the Academies: the National Academy of Sciences (NAS, created in 1863), the National Academy of Engineering (created in 1964), the Institute of Medicine (created in 1970), and the National Research Council (created by the NAS in 1916). The national academies receive funding from a range of sources, including government allocations, private grants, and foundation support.

Rationale for a New Academy

These four organizations were created during times of extreme need for the nation. Today, pressing and catastrophic challenges again face the United States and the world, including precipitous climate change, species extinction, epidemics affecting human health, and a wide range of toxins, the impacts of which are poorly understood even when recognized.

The environmental design disciplines now recognize that the earth’s resources are, to use Paul Hawken’s term, our “natural capital” which must be protected rather than expended. As a result, new knowledge regarding the design, construction, and maintenance of cities, landscapes, buildings, interiors, and products is being developed daily. To deliver this knowledge in the most timely and powerful way to colleagues in allied disciplines and, more importantly, to the public, it is necessary to create a multiprofessional, multidisciplinary organization responsible only to the public.

Structure

The National Academy of Environmental Design is envisioned as a parallel structure to the existing National Academies. Internationally recognized experts will become members of the NAED, and existing members will nominate and select future inductees. Subdisciplines, known as sections, will be identified, which NAED members will join. The NAED and its members will participate in studies and projects executed by the National Research Council. The NAED will also undertake independent projects, using its own funds.

Financial Implications

The NAED would operate on the basis of its own endowment and through funds supporting National Research Council studies, many of which come from the federal government, as well as NAED-initiated projects.

As is the case with the existing National Academies, all members of the National Academy of Environmental Design would provide their services pro bono to the citizens of the United States. Details of funding needs and sources will be explored by the steering committee, relying heavily on models established by the other four national academies.

Process to Launch the National Academy of Environmental Design

A Steering Committee primarily composed of academic and professional leaders of the key design disciplines will be selected immediately. Several nationally prominent advocates of environmental sustainability from other disciplines will be included. Members will reach out to achieve broad consensus within their respective disciplines and will lead efforts to engage the leadership of the existing academies to create the NAED. Parallel to this will be efforts to raise start-up funding for creating the NAED. The Steering Committee will remain active until the Academy is fully functional.

RESOLUTION TO CREATE A NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

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Whereas the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine, and the National Research Council were created to address critical national issues and provide advice to the federal government and the public; and,

Whereas each branch was created at a time of significant national challenge and in some cases expressly to respond to a significant national challenge; and,

Whereas the multiple challenges of global climate change, species extinction, environmentally caused diseases such as asthma, and widespread environmental contaminants call for a coordinated national response; and,

Whereas the existing National Academies do not provide the breadth of multidisciplinary expertise necessary to effectively respond to these multiple and linked environmental challenges; and,

Whereas the environmental design disciplines—involved in the design, construction, and maintenance of cities, landscapes, buildings, interiors, and products—do have the expertise to assist the citizens of the United States in addressing and mitigating the impacts of these multiple environmental challenges;

Be it hereby resolved that the undersigned endorse the creation of a National Academy of Environmental Design, the mission of which will be:

To serve the people of the United States of America and the world by providing expert advice and assistance in the sustainable design and maintenance of landscapes, cities and buildings, including in their relationship to environmental effects on life support systems of the planet Earth, and the sustainable design and maintenance of all aspects of human settlement contained therein.

Be it further resolved that the undersigned support the efforts of a Steering Committee, composed of representatives of the undersigned design professions of architecture, landscape architecture, city and regional planning, and others, to advocate for and establish a National Academy of Environmental Design, in all contexts necessary, with the understanding that the Steering Committee will report progress regularly to the undersigned.

Note: By signing this you are indicating your personal support of this effort and consent to having your name, title, university, and department included in lists of supporters of this effort. All supporters will be updated by email on progress. Supporters may have their name removed from the list on written request to ACSA.

Name _____

Title _____

University _____

School/Dept. _____

() Yes, I would be willing to contact additional people to support this effort, such as legislators, other professionals, and professional organizations.