Across Nation, Green Buildings at Forefront of Government Environmental Agendas

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The New York State Capitol in Albany. Credit: iStockphoto

Government leadership is the catalyst for creating a better built environment. By embracing LEED-based policies, or establishing energy efficiency goals for public buildings, governments provide pathways for the private sector to follow.

2012 saw a number of public green building laws enacted across America. A few examples include ordinances passed in places ranging from San Louis Obispo County, Calif., to Arvada, Colo., and all the way to Chatham County, Ga. Currently, government leadership has produced green building legislation in 442 localities, including 384 cities, 58 counties and across 45 states.

As the calendar turns to 2013, states are already taking the lead. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo recently issued an executive order requiring that all state buildings increase energy efficiency by 20 percent by 2020. To help make this a reality, the order also launched the Build Smart NY initiative, which creates a framework to use available building data to prioritize projects, improve the most inefficient buildings first, and pursue operating and maintenance programs to meet energy usage goals. This effort sets a clear leadership standard by New York's policymakers to make the needed investments to protect future taxpayer money, create jobs and conserve natural resources.

While executives and policymakers in many cities and states are demonstrating the courage to lead on this issue, USGBC and its network of chapters are continuing to work to support their efforts through USGBC's Leadership with LEED Campaign. This campaign serves as a vehicle for dedicated and passionate USGBC volunteers to provide the resources and expertise to empower lawmakers to advance green building legislation in their cities and states. This campaign allows our volunteers to make a difference in their communities through direct engagement with elected leaders and be able to clearly articulate why governments should lead on building green.

In 2013, the USGBC community looks forward to working with all leaders within local, state and federal governments as they pursue policies that demonstrate leadership by example in building green.

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