Chapter Advocacy For the Win

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This past month has been a real doozy.

We, here on USGBC National's advocacy team, got wind that Big Chemical was lobbying the Senate Energy and Natural Resources (SENR) Committee to attach a "poison pill" amendment to popular energy efficiency legislation that would ban LEED for use by the federal government. Thanks to the quick action of our chapters and their unrelenting commitment to better, healthier places to live, learn and work, we were able to keep the amendment from being added during markup, but the fight is far from over.

The legislation was the nearly universally supported Shaheen-Portman energy efficiency bill that was marked up in the SENR committee on Wednesday. Our chapters made sure those senators on the committee knew the facts.

The facts are that both the General Services Administration Green Building Advisory Committee and the National Academy of Sciences have recently suggested that federal agencies use LEED. American taxpayers have been receiving major savings thanks to LEED (the LEED Gold Treasury Building is saving $3.5 million dollars per year, by itself). And finally, that no other rating system comes close to the infrastructure of LEED. Facts can transcend politics.

Beyond the standard letter writing campaign, the chapters put up Change.org petitions addressed to their senators on the SENR committee. With every signature, one more voice was carried to the Hill. Hundreds signed the petitions in less than 48 hours, especially those from Michigan, Minnesota and Tennessee, which sent in more than 100 signatures each.

It is a testament to the green building practitioners around the country that the amendment was not introduced, but it can still be offered on the floor in the coming weeks. Here is a link to the members of the SENR committee. If you haven't weighed in with your senator on this matter, it's not too late to make a difference.

Feel free to contact me at froberts@usgbc.org to see how you can help or if you have any questions.

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