

Highlighting the Growth of the Green Building Industry in State Capitols Across the Country

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Texas State Capital, photo credit: Kumar Appaiah via Flickr

Higher performing, healthier LEED-Certified buildings are becoming the market norm, increasingly demanded by owners and tenants alike. Did policy play a role in this growth? At the state and local levels, the answer is 'yes.'

States and localities are embracing energy efficiency building policies, adopting rating systems like LEED for public building construction, and incentivizing better building practices in the private sector. The support of USGBC's network of chapters and advocates has helped guide and prompt good policy making in a variety of ways.

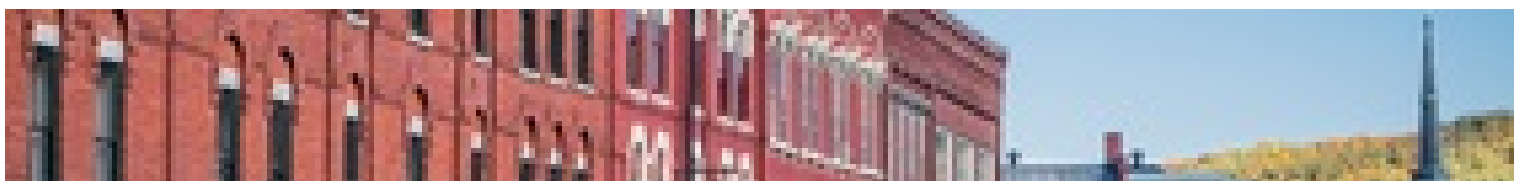
In recent years, more and more USGBC chapters are utilizing advocacy days as a way to directly engage and build relationships with elected leaders in their states. Meeting with legislatures where they work is an extremely effective tool to instigate change and support government leadership. Already this year, several chapters across a wide swath of the U.S. have held [enthusiastic advocacy days in their respective state capitols](#).

Recently, I was fortunate enough to participate in two advocacy days in Texas and Minnesota. Each advocacy day was well attended by volunteers from across the chapter region. Each chapter clearly understood the political climate in their state and the priorities within the legislature. Each chapter structured their legislative asks towards specific issues that would generate the greatest impact to furthering USGBC's mission in the area.

In Texas, advocates focused on water conservation bills, like [House Bills 4 and 11](#) and [HB 449](#), and helped secure support from officials across the political aisle. In Minnesota, the focus included educating officials on a number of green building policies outlined in the USGBC advocacy campaigns including [Improve Energy Data Access](#) and [Mainstream Benchmarking](#) while also focusing on a specific bill, [HF 320](#), which would establish a [conversation revolving loan fund](#) for school districts. The direct engagement in each state paid off immediately as USGBC Texas advocates were asked to testify in support of HB 449 and [USGBC Minnesota Executive Director Sheri Brezinka](#) testified in front of the House Environment Committee in support of HF 320, which subsequently passed the committee.

The advocacy days in Texas and Minnesota show how green building practitioners can generate an immediate policy impact through direct engagement with public officials. Advocates in each state, as well as in all chapters who have held, or are planning, an advocacy day deserve many thanks. Their efforts to support government leadership in turn support market growth for green building. It is this commitment, by hard working USGBC volunteers, to affect positive change in their state capitols which truly show the strength and dedication of USGBC's advocacy community. A job well done.

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