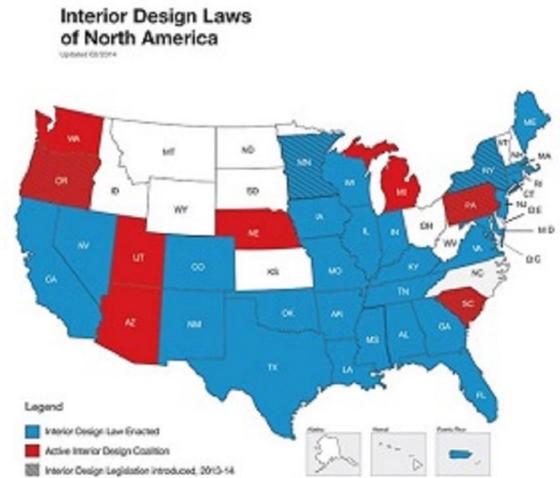


# The Long Battle for Legislation

 [www.interiorsandsources.com/interior-design-news/interior-design-news-detail/articleid/20141/title/the-long-battle-for-legislation.aspx](http://www.interiorsandsources.com/interior-design-news/interior-design-news-detail/articleid/20141/title/the-long-battle-for-legislation.aspx)

Well, it's official: Utah has become the 27<sup>th</sup> state to officially recognize interior design as a licensed profession! This is a huge win for supporters of interior design legislation in the state, as well as across the country.

Both ASID and IIDA announced earlier this month that Utah Senate Bill 117 was passed, a legal victory that creates certification for commercial interior designers and will allow them to submit their documents for building permits. The effort, led by lobbyist Amy Coombs, Senior Partner, Prestige Government Relations and Consulting Group, has been a two-year process championed by key industry partners, including ASID, IIDA, Interior Design and Education for Legislation (IDEAL) for Utah, and the IIDA Intermountain Chapter. For a more detailed explanation of the applicability of this landmark legislation and the impact it will have on interior designers, visit ASID's [One Voice](#) campaign site.



As such, the following map of states that have enacted laws supporting interior design that we [published last year](#) should be modified slightly to change Utah from red to blue.

As much as I'm pleased to hear another state has joined the ranks of the (slim) majority that have legitimized the profession in this way, there are two realities to face: one, there are still far too many states that don't have any legislation on the books; and two, the opposition to licensing is still pretty fierce. As Randy Fiser, CEO of ASID, noted, "This bill is a winning testament to securing just one basic right of interior designers. We have many more to go before we can declare a total victory for the profession."

I know from personal experience that when [we took a stand](#) as a magazine in favor of interior design legislation back in 2008, people came out of the woodwork to write to me as then editor-in-chief to express their disappointment in us for selling out to the "design cartels." I kid you not.

As I wrote in an essay I contributed to the book, [The State of the Interior Design Profession](#) (Fairchild Books, 2010), I believe the issue of licensing is among the greatest challenges to the profession as a whole:

*Much like other professional practices serving the public—such as doctors, architects, lawyers, and nurses—interior designers have struggled to gain the recognition they have sought in establishing the profession's legitimacy and requiring licensure to practice across all 50 states. To date, only 25 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have some form of legislation (Title Acts or Practice Acts) regulating the profession (American Society of Interior Designers, 2009). In others, wars are being waged in our courts where opponents of licensure are claiming an infringement on their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech—presumably to be able to call themselves "interior designers" as opposed to "interior decorators"—and with the mission to annihilate the idea that the work interior designers do has any measurable impact on the health, safety, and welfare of the public (Carpenter II, 2006). Add to all this the fact that interior designers essentially are divided in their allegiances to one of two professional associations—the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and International Interior Design Association (IIDA)—and it becomes clear why the profession of interior design needs to resolve its inner conflicts and unify its members under a common body of knowledge, with a common purpose of serving the public (not narrow self interests), if it hopes to be taken seriously and survive the challenging years ahead. In*

*short, the profession needs a unity of purpose and practice with a well-developed identity.*

Since I penned those words seven years ago, only two states have enacted legislation to regulate the practice of design. As I said earlier, I'm happy that Utah has joined the ranks of those that do, and I applaud those who fought long and hard for this.

Although the battle may have been won, I'm afraid the war is far from over.

## Comment to **The Long Battle for Legislation**

*Utah has become the 27th state to recognize interior design as a licensed profession*

By Robert Nieminen 03/29/2016

<http://www.interiorsandsources.com/interior-design-news/interior-design-news-detail/articleid/20141/title/the-long-battle-for-legislation.aspx>

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by Doug Stead •

I'm curious as to why no one has posted any comments celebrating the passage of this bill yet under this article. I appear to be the first. Perhaps like me they understand that it does absolutely nothing other than create a title, nothing more. The bill does not prevent any one in Utah from practicing interior design, it does not prevent anyone in Utah from calling themselves an interior designer, and it does not prevent anyone in Utah from submitting plans, qualified or otherwise, for a building permit. I've read the actual bill in its entirety and if I'm wrong then someone please point it out to me. If certified commercial interior designers in Utah can do something that no one else can legally do then I'd like to know what that is. It seems to me the status quo remains other than a title that a few will surely seek in order to feel better about themselves, or perhaps to gain a marketing edge over their competitors. The only good thing about it that I can see, like the certification in California and other states that have regulatory programs for interior designers, is that it will identify for the general public those who have met the requirements of this certification as having some form of minimum competency demonstrated by education, examination and experience. It is still buyer beware as being certified or licensed is still not an indication of talent or competency. Some of that only comes with experience and practice, and some you're born with. Nothing to do with licensing.

Fiser of ASID said: "This bill is a winning testament to securing just one basic right of interior designers." Really? What right? The right to call oneself an interior designer? That's already been upheld by the courts and is secured by the First Amendment. The right to practice? Practicing interior design and submitting plans is a privilege, not a right. The building officials will decide who can and who cannot submit for permits, not a licensing agency. Ask any architect or engineer who has been turned down at the permit counter for inadequate or shoddy plans.

You said: "As much as I'm pleased to hear another state has joined the ranks of the (slim) majority that have legitimized the profession in this way,..." Legitimization does not come from licensing, or certification. That's called qualification. Legitimization comes from providing good services and competent practice in an ethical and honest manner. Being licensed does not guarantee this. Would licensing journalists make them better journalists? You're a journalist. Think about it!

I know some of your readers are going to get emotionally charged about what I have written, but after 25 years of being in the certification business of interior designers in California I've forgotten more than most people have learned, including those mentioned in your article. The bottom line is interior designers don't kill people, if they did then they're no longer practicing interior design, they're practicing architecture or engineering, or acting as a licensed contractor, with or without a

license. I know there will be some who will put forth the slippery floor and flammable wall-covering arguments, but you don't need to be an interior designer to do that work, and even though it may require a contractors license in some cases, any homeowner or even commercial building owner can do this themselves without a designer.

The line between architects and interior designers is very clear. One is structural and seismic, the other is non-structural and non-seismic. If you want to do the former, then become an architect and get a license. Let the discussion begin.