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Building Officials**

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Administered By

**Jenkins Management Solutions,
LLC** (Olympia, Washington)

January 12, 2021

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

On behalf of the Washington Association of Building Officials (WABO) we are respectfully submitting a formal petition for the immediate repeal of the State Building Code Council's emergency rule adopted on January 8, 2021 extending the 2018 code implementation date to July 1, 2021 as afforded in RCW 34.05.350.

This additional extension to the implementation date would undermine the countless hours of volunteer time and the integrity of the process of the Washington State Building Code Council (SBCC) itself. In every legislative cycle, bills are introduced that attempt to create building code regulation through legislation. WABO pleads with legislators to utilize the SBCC process instead of having this regulation buried in bills. We now fear elected officials will see these continued delays as a threat to their initiatives and we will lose support for all the good work the SBCC does.

Delay of the 2018 code implementation also impacts several initiatives passed by legislation. Some of those initiatives include:

- Affordable housing; last year legislation directed the SBCC to adopt rules specific for "Tiny Homes". The new code will have several modifications to allow typical tiny home construction.
- Accessibility; legislation was approved that required all access aisles adjacent to van accessible parking to be 96 inches. The 2018 code was adjusted accordingly.
- Inclusiveness; new code requirements were established for gender-neutral restrooms as directed by legislation.
- Sustainability; legislation required the SBCC to allow for mass timber or cross laminated timber construction, a robust set of changes are included in the new Building Code.
- Climate change; legislation requires a 70% reduction of energy consumption by 2030. The new energy code advances that initiative.

Delaying the 2018 code implementation also will delay a critical life safety improvement to the codes, particularly for Washingtonians and visitors near the Pacific and Puget Sound coastlines. Just prior to voting to delay the code implementation, the SBCC voted to approve an emergency rule that the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had requested. The emergency rule requires use of more accurate maps produced by DNR to determine whether, and how, important structures like schools and hospitals near the Pacific and Puget Sound coastline need to be designed to resist tsunamis. The DNR maps will require some structures to be designed for tsunamis, where they would not have been required to without the emergency rule. In addition, the emergency rule makes changes to the code that would remove disincentives to building tsunami evacuation structures in areas that are especially vulnerable to a tsunami caused by a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, such as the Long Beach area. These changes are necessary to better protect people in those vulnerable areas.

WABO is sympathetic to all Washingtonians affected by the COVID-19 virus. Like the rest of the construction industry, our members have had to modify their business practices overnight to accommodate the needs of the communities they serve, therefore we supported the previous SBCC actions to delay the implementation of the 2018 Washington State Codes. That extension allowed time for WABO to organize virtual training and for Washington State University to create additional online tools and training for the energy code.

Building officials have used the time gained by the last delay of the code implementation to train our staff, create new COVID procedures and align staffing levels with the current work activity.

Currently WABO members have been working to modify ordinances and complete all the necessary work to implement the new code starting February 1st, the second delayed implementation date approved by the SBCC. Many jurisdictions have already finalized modifications approved by their City / County Councils. If the third delayed implementation date extension remains those Building Officials and Councils will have to redo the work they have already completed.

We would implore you to consider our petition to repeal the SBCC action to again delay the implementation of the 2018 Washington Codes, and to maintain the current implementation date of February 1, 2021. Additionally, due to how quickly this date is approaching we would further ask you to rule on this request expeditiously to mitigate concerns of uncertainty in the industry.

Sincerely,



Kurt Aldworth, President
Washington Association of Building Officials



Lee Kranz, Vice President
Washington Association of Building Officials



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