

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 24, 2009

Encourage Energy Efficiency and Hazard Mitigation
Give Local Governments Incentives to Update and Enforce Local Building Codes

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to invite you to cosponsor H.R. 2246, legislation to establish the Community Building Code Administration Grant Program. Our bill establishes a competitive, matching grant program to provide incentives to local governments to update and enforce local building codes. Nothing in the bill affects the current ability of local governments to set and enforce their own building codes. Similar legislation (H.R.4461) was introduced in the 110th Congress, received bipartisan support, and was unanimously approved by the House. Senators Landrieu, Martinez, Johnson, and Lieberman have introduced companion legislation (S. 970) in the Senate.

Code compliant building is essential in reducing vulnerability to future hazards such as fire, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes. In addition, up-to-date building codes can promote energy efficiency. In fact, much attention has been focused on the huge energy savings that can be achieved by increased energy efficiency in buildings, which consume nearly 40% of all energy and 70% of the electricity produced in the U.S. Indeed, much progress has been made in improving building energy codes. But these codes don't make a difference unless code officials are properly trained and have sufficient resources to inspect buildings for compliance. Properly enforced building safety codes also save American taxpayers money. According to a study conducted by the National Institute of Building Sciences, every \$1 spent on mitigation saves \$4 in future disaster assistance.

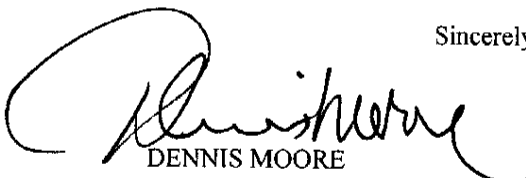
There are no dedicated federal funds for building code administration. Although Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds have been available for this purpose in the past, along with administrative allowances from FEMA's three mitigation programs (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program, and Flood Mitigation Assistance Program), competition for these funds is intense and code compliance is typically a low priority. Local code enforcement budgets, unfortunately, have significantly suffered in recent years. The result is an overworked and understaffed enforcement office causing higher insurance premiums for residents.

This program will not infringe upon local and state authority to enact and enforce building codes. It simply provides sorely-needed funding for them to do so. The bill includes a 5-year sunset on the program, authorizes \$100 million over that period to execute it, caps awards at \$1 million per recipient, requires recipients to match a portion of funds received, and outlines eligible uses of funds and selection criteria, with preference offered to governments in financial distress.

This bill is supported by the Alliance to Save Energy, International Code Council (ICC), Congressional Fire Services Institute, Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America, Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS), International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Association of Counties, and many other groups. You can find a full list of supporting organizations at: www.iccsafe.org/government/congressional/code-grant/support.html.

To cosponsor this legislation or request further information, please let us know or contact Glen Sears [Rep. Moore; glen.sears@mail.house.gov, 6-3027] or Nicole Austin [Rep. Biggert; Nicole.austin@mail.house.gov, 5-3515].

Sincerely,


DENNIS MOORE
Member of Congress


JUDY BIGGERT
Member of Congress