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Senators Propose Green Building Legislation

Lawmakers urge federal research, coordination, and incentives

Two senators are working to put more federal resources toward green building, including \$10 million in grants to state and local education agencies for implementing green technology in schools and \$2 million for a new Office of High-Performance Green Buildings housed at the General Services Administration (GSA) that would promote public outreach, research and development, and budget and life-cycle analysis of sustainable buildings. The legislation also aims to coordinate federal green building efforts, create incentives for federal green building purchases and practices, and support the market for green building.

Saying "It's time for the federal government to catch up to the private sector and work together to reap the many benefits of high-performance design," Senators Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.) and Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) have introduced the "High Performance Green Buildings Act of 2004," a bill that calls for a total of \$35 million over five years to support federal buildings and schools that are designed and operated to boost environmental, economic, health, and productivity performance.

The legislation would:

- Expand existing green building research
- Provide \$10 million in grants to state and local education agencies for the implementation of the Environmental Protection Agency's Tools for Schools Program; school facility design, construction, and renovation; and systematic improvements with school siting, indoor air quality, contaminants, and other health issues
- Promote research on schools to identify relations between school facilities and student health, safety, and productivity
- Aid security efforts by providing alternative sources of energy and water in the event of a terrorist attack
- Improve the coordination of federal green building efforts
- Provide for public outreach and assistance to states
- Support green-building-related markets
- Create an incentive for making investments in federal green-building purchases and practices
- Require the comptroller general to review the federal budget process to identify and incorporate long-term savings that can accrue from the use of life-cycle costing in building construction
- Create an Office of High-Performance Green Buildings at GSA to promote public outreach and research and development
- Create an Interagency Steering Committee to increase the coordination of

Read the legislation

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implementation of laws and executive orders.

The legislation responds to two reports, "Building Momentum: National Trends and Prospects for High-Performance Green Buildings," prepared by the U.S. Green Building Council and "The Federal Commitment to Green Building: Experiences and Expectations," prepared in 2003 by the president's Office of the Federal Environmental Executive. It was first comprehensive survey of the government's nearly 500,000 buildings and its efforts to go green. That report noted that federal buildings have reduced their energy use by 23 percent and cut their carbon emissions by 2.8 million metric tons since 1985, with eight buildings gaining LEED™ certification, and more than 60 federal buildings seeking the designation from the U.S. Green Building Council. It called for more education, research, measuring tools, coordination, and integration to advance sustainable building practices in government.

AIA Government Advocacy applauds the senators' efforts to make green design a priority this election year. The staff is working with the bills' sponsors, the AIA Committee on the Environment, and other architects to ensure that the language reflects members' views and the best thinking on sustainable design and gather bipartisan support for the legislation.

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