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# BOSTON SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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To: BSLA Membership  
From: Tom Doolittle, BSLA Trustee and Licensure Chair  
Re: Update on Licensure Upgrade Legislation  
Date: 21 November 2011

As most of you are aware, the Boston Society of Landscape Architects has been working on legislation to upgrade Massachusetts' licensure law for landscape architects. Thank you to those of you who have helped us in this effort by sending a letter or meeting with your legislators.

The current law provides for protection of the title "landscape architect": it requires individuals to become registered before they are able to call themselves landscape architects, and sets standards for education, experience and examination for registration. It does not, however, restrict the practice of landscape architecture in any way: any person can provide the same services as landscape architects as long as they do not call themselves a landscape architect. Massachusetts is now one of only three states with this type of registration; every other state has a practice act, which protects the services that landscape architects provide as well as the title.

In January of this year, the BSLA filed a bill in the state legislature to change the law to a full practice act. The proposed revisions to the current law contained in the bill are very simple: it adds a new sentence to the definitions that explicitly requires persons who practice landscape architecture to meet the same education, experience and examination requirements as the current law. It also cleans up some language in the law that is no longer appropriate or required.

The purpose of this legislation is twofold: First, to provide the citizens of the Commonwealth with a greater level of protection by ensuring those who provide landscape architectural services have the knowledge and skills to practice safely and appropriately; and secondly to provide a higher level of scrutiny for landscape architects by increasing the powers and ability of the state Board of Registration of Landscape Architects to regulate practitioners. It is not intended to take work away from individuals who are providing services similar to ours but whose work does not pose the same kinds of public health, safety and welfare concerns that the work of landscape architects does. To this end, the bill also provides some broader exemptions to cover contractors and tradesmen to ensure their work is not impacted, and to allow landscape designers to provide services for simpler, less publicly accessed projects.

For the past eight months, we have been working closely with our bill sponsors and the House and Senate Chairs of the Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure to explain the importance of this bill, the public health, safety and welfare issues at its core, and the differences between landscape architects and their training and experience and others in the broader landscape industry. There is resistance to our bill from other professions and groups because of their perceptions that it might have an impact on their occupations, but we are trying to work through alternate language with them.

Doing this kind of legislative work is a very long, slow process: The legislative session started in January 2011 and ends in July 2012. We had hoped that the bill would move quickly, but due to the legislative calendar and other priorities we do not expect to reach any final conclusions until at least some time this spring. We will continue to work with the chairman, members of the joint committee, and key legislators with the intent of getting the bill moved out of committee and onto the floor of the house and senate.

You may be receiving calls or emails asking for your assistance in contacting your legislators about this bill; if you do, please take the few minutes necessary to make a phone call or send a message in support of the bill. All the information necessary to communicate with your legislator will be provided; if you feel uncertain about what to do or need help in understanding the issues, please contact me or the chapter office, and we will be happy to assist.

Our success is ultimately dependent on your willingness to support this effort, so please invest a few minutes in the future of our profession.