

Advocacy & Legislation. What is Interior Design Legislation, why is it important and what does it have to do with my practice?

The general public is not uniformly aware of what an interior design professional does. Currently, anyone can legally call themselves an interior designer and do some measure of interior design work. Imagine trying to call yourself an architect or a medical doctor. Interior design professionals who have proven through their education, experience and in many cases a qualifying examination should be recognized and given the right to practice their profession to the fullest extent within the scope of their work.

Interior design regulation in the United States began in the 1970s as a way to protect the rights of interior designers to practice, to allow designers to practice to the fullest extent of their abilities and to establish and maintain professional standards that protect the health, safety and welfare of the general public. Many believe that legal recognition, achieved through licensing, registration, and certification brings uniformity to the profession, defines responsibility, and encourages excellence in the Interior Design industry. Twenty-eight states and jurisdictions have enacted some type of interior design legislation.

Some states have laws that regulate the use of a designation, such as “certified interior designer” or “registered interior designer” and are enacted in order to raise public awareness of the qualifications of interior design professionals. These laws do not require individuals to become licensed in order to practice interior design, nor do they restrict an individual from providing the service of interior design. A person cannot use this designation unless he or she meets the minimum education, experience and examination requirements established in that state, and he or she fully applies for use of the state-regulated designation with the proper state board. The NCIDQ is the qualifying examination used in these states.

A few states have a type of law that requires an individual to have a license in order to practice a profession. These laws prohibit the performance of professional services by anyone not licensed by the state agency charged with the duty of regulating that profession. The NCIDQ is the qualifying examination used in these states.

Thirteen states give professional recognition to qualified interior designers, eleven allow qualified designers to sign and/or seal their projects, and four allow qualified designers to sign, seal and pull permits for their projects.