



Structural Engineering Licensing and NCSEA Committees

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As the new President of NCSEA beginning my term in October 2009, I plan to lead the organization by helping to focus our available time and energy on two activities – initiating efforts leading to structural engineering licensing in up to 10 states, and increasing the participation and effectiveness of our committees.

Of the 55 jurisdictions in the United States, only 12 of them currently have a Structural Engineering Practice or Title Act. One of NCSEA's Strategic Initiatives is to provide leadership and assistance to our State Member Organizations (MOs) such that they can facilitate legislation leading to SE licensing. Utah and Washington were recently successful in this effort; and several other states are currently interested in and/or already pursuing such Acts – including Florida, Ohio, California (has a Partial Practice Act currently), Michigan, Nebraska, Alaska, and Texas.

There are several factors in our favor in this effort. ACEC's CASE, and ASCE's SEI, both agree with NCSEA that separate licensure is recommended. SEI's policy reads as follows: *"The Structural Engineering Institute (SEI) of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) supports structural engineering licensure, encourages all qualified and licensed engineers practicing structural engineering to obtain a structural engineer license, and encourages jurisdictions to license structural engineers as a specialty."*

Also in our favor is the recent NCEES development of a new, 16-hour S.E. exam. Currently, the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) offers two separate eight-hour structural engineering (SE) examinations: SE I and SE II. Many state registration boards currently recognize, accept and offer the SE I examination for PE candidates. Effective April 2011, NCEES will cease offering the present SE I and SE II examinations and replace them with a single 16-hour SE examination. We at NCSEA believe that this new exam may eventually be accepted in all states for structural engineering licensure, a huge breakthrough in attaining our goal of uniform licensing requirements throughout the country.

The new S.E. exam is, in part, attributable to work done by the Structural Engineering Certification Board (SECB). SECB was established by NCSEA as an interim step towards uniform national licensing, setting as its goals: 1) establishing an identity for structural engineering as a unique profession, and 2) specifying the knowledge and qualifications appropriate to the practice of structural engineering. SECB has recognized and requires the SE II exam, but not the SE I exam, and has worked with NCEES to promote the concept of a single appropriate exam.

Lastly, NCEES is working on establishing their *Model Law Structural Engineer* as an ANSI standard for engineering practice. The standard would specify the criteria for defining competency in the practice of structural engineering and include specifications for uniformity in requirements for education, experience, and examination for licensure as a Structural Engineer.

However, there are certain forces working against us. NSPE is not in favor of separate licensing for structural, nor any other, engineers. The State of Connecticut's Governor M. Jodi Rell recently submitted a proposal to do away with the state Architectural Licensing Board, as well as the State Board of Examiners for Professional Engineers and

Land Surveyors. Crain's Chicago Business ran an article in August 2009 that questioned the need for state licensing of some professions, including manicurists, barbers, and ... engineers!

Now is the time to organize a group of volunteers within your MO and start the process with your state legislature to enact a Structural Engineering Practice Act!

A second activity for NCSEA to focus on in 2010 is increasing the participation and effectiveness of our committees. NCSEA's Code Advisory Committee (CAC) is arguably our most effective committee. With 45 members and 5 sub-committees, this group represents NCSEA on the International Code Committee and has been very effective in providing "One Voice" that represents the consensus of thought of all practicing structural engineers regarding code changes and updates. Notably, the NCSEA Joint Industry Committee on Structural Integrity, an ad hoc sub-committee of the CAC, was instrumental in providing reasonable code changes in response to the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001.

Some of our other committees have been limited in effectiveness by the available time and energy of their members, which tells us that we are going to need more participation in the future, to become stronger and more successful in achieving our goals and initiatives. NCSEA Committees in need of your help include: Advocacy, Continuing Education, Licensing, Basic Education, Publications, SEER (Structural Engineer Emergency Response), and Membership. Please check our website at www.ncsea.com for more information about our committees and their activities.

From my experience with committee work through SEAIOI, I learned that "you get out of it what you put into it" – or, as the Bible states, "I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands". For example, 7 years ago, SEAIOI's City of Chicago Liaison Committee was quite active with the so-called Scaffold and Façade Ordinances. As a result of the March 9, 2002 scaffold collapse at the John Hancock Center, a scaffold ordinance was introduced on May 29, 2002 by Mayor Daley at the Chicago City Council meeting. Later, Alderman Stone's Building Committee introduced a revised façade ordinance on July 2, 2002. Working on both of these proposed ordinances required significant 'extra-curricular' work by me, along with my committee members, but the involvement and people that I met along the way added tremendously to my experiences as a structural engineer. In addition to meeting and working with municipal leaders, I developed a working relationship with the leaders of BOMA Chicago, prominent architects in the city, and contractors involved with scaffolding and façade repairs.

I hope that I have piqued your interest and that you will choose to join us in our adventures in 2010. I believe that you will find the time and effort well worth it! ■

