



PAC OPT-OUT | Frequently-asked Questions

1. What is the AIA Virginia PAC?

The AIA Virginia Political Action Committee (PAC) is the funding vehicle used to support incumbent legislators and candidates seeking elected office whose policy positions support the profession of architecture and align with our Directory of Public Policies and Position Statements. PAC contributions are made to a campaign, which is an entity, and not to the legislator, as an individual. Contributions to the PAC are voluntary and shall in no way be a condition of membership in AIA Virginia. The PAC is governed by its own Board of Trustees, separate from AIA Virginia's Board of Directors. The Executive Vice President of AIA Virginia also serves ex-officio on the PAC Board of Trustees.

2. Why does the AIA Virginia PAC make political contributions?

Part of AIA Virginia's advocacy mission is to educate policy makers on the importance and value of the architecture profession. We often find that once a legislator is educated regarding our issues, they will support our policy positions when not in conflict with a larger political priority of that legislator. Political contributions play a key role in this process by providing AIA Virginia lobbyists and members with an additional opportunity to develop relationships with legislators through attendance at campaign fundraising events. It is through attendance at these events that we, as an industry, develop the relationships needed to pursue our advocacy agenda. Remember, the Virginia General Assembly is comprised of legislators serving on a part-time basis and hailing from varying backgrounds, professions, experiences, and cultures. Many have no idea what architects do or why what we do is important for the community.

Showing support for a legislator or candidate is done in one of two ways: time or money. Handing out flyers and knocking on doors on behalf of 140 members of the General Assembly is unfeasible for an organization of our size. Therefore, we demonstrate our support through contributions, not unlike personally showing your support to a non-profit. For example, to advance the mission of Habitat for Humanity, one must either swing a hammer on site on a Saturday or make a financial contribution. This is the only way Habitat can achieve its goals and is how it knows you exist as a resource.

The same principle holds true for a legislator or a candidate running for elected office. In addition, making a contribution to attend a legislative event provides the organization an opportunity to educate legislators about what we do as architects. This is the foundation for relationship-building and establishes AIA Virginia as a resource for consulting when certain bills are introduced during the General Assembly session.

3. The PAC only focuses on procurement issues. My firm does not do public work, so the PAC is irrelevant to me and provides no value to my firm.

The PAC benefits ALL firms. If you like the way you are allowed to practice in Virginia, then the PAC is relevant to you. We have established a positive legal framework for practicing in Virginia, and the PAC is essential to ensuring this framework continues to benefit the profession as a whole.

In reality, we advocate for issues outlined in our Directory of Public Policies and Position Statements, including: civic engagement, resiliency, mass transit, tort reform, regulation, the business of architecture, environmental responsibility, diversity + inclusion, accessibility, housing, historic preservation, and livable communities, to name a few priorities. Since 2018, our members'

perception of the PAC has shifted, and the PAC's value is being recognized through increased investment. These investments allow AIA Virginia to begin advancing many of these issues.

4. Why is this now just coming up? The PAC has been around for some time and everything has seemed to be going alright.

In March 2019, a survey of 2,338 AIA Virginia members and allied members garnered nearly a 20% response rate. The responses clearly indicated the value of advocacy to members. Surveys have also shown that members desire the AIA to be more instrumental in the public realm and proactively promote the value of architects and architecture. Our PAC is the first step in building relationships with policymakers and those who have influence over our profession and the built environment.

The PAC is unique in that members participate voluntarily, yet the benefits impact everyone in our profession. AIAVA's PAC initiative is the only equitable way to fully support the many elements of advocacy. Prior to 2018, less than 3% of our membership invested in the PAC. As such, the Board voted to transfer a portion of membership dues to the PAC unless one decides to opt out.

5. I thought a portion of my dues went to Government Advocacy. Tell me again, what is this for?

Currently, a portion of your AIA Virginia dues goes toward paying lobbyist fees and day-to-day business operations of performing advocacy. Now that the Board has adopted the Opt-Out plan, \$10 from each Architect member's dues and \$5 from each Associate member's dues go toward the PAC (unless the individual opts-out).

6. How do you decide which candidates to support?

The PAC Board of Trustees, which consists of AIA members, develops a Disbursement Plan using counsel from our lobbyist team at Williams Mullen. Primarily, we focus on individuals who sit on the House and Senate General Laws Committees and members of the House and Senate leadership. Many bills that impact the profession of architecture land in the General Laws Committee. This does not mean that other Committees are unimportant; we strategically contribute to members on other Committees as our available PAC member investments allow.

7. Does the AIA Virginia PAC benefit candidates for national office or U.S. House and Senate legislators?

No. AIA National has a PAC called ArchiPAC, which supports legislators in the U.S. House and Senate as well as candidates for national office—a completely different undertaking than the AIA Virginia PAC. **The AIA Virginia PAC is used to support legislators in the Virginia House of Delegates and Virginia Senate as well as candidates for state office.**

8. Do other state AIA components, as well as other professional societies and trade associations, have a PAC?

Yes, many (if not most) statewide AIA components have a PAC, and a number of these allocate a portion of their dues to their PAC in a similar way. However, PAC laws vary from state to state, so AIA Virginia's approach, structure, and documentation cannot always be directly compared to components in other states. Within Virginia, most professional societies and trade associations have Political Action Committees.

9. Is the AIA Virginia PAC partisan?

The AIA Virginia PAC is non-partisan. Contributions to one political party may be greater than the other in any given year due to the composition of the General Assembly. The political party in

power will always have far more influence on the outcome of legislation and state policy than the party in the minority. However, you will see we always provide contributions to both political parties in any given year.

10. Do you support AIA members that run for state office?

Yes, and we encourage it! In 2019, one of our members ran for the 57th District House seat. Through our PAC, we were able to invest \$1,225 in this member.

11. Do I get a check back for the amount of the dues increase if I decide not to allocate it as a PAC investment?

By Virginia law, an organization cannot mandate that you contribute to a PAC. As such, AIA Virginia will allow those who wish to not invest in the PAC to have their dues increase go to the organization's General Operating Fund. No rebates will be issued.

12. Will this allocation to the PAC occur annually?

Currently, the plan is to defer a portion of dues money to the PAC annually starting in 2020. A member will ALWAYS have the option to move that portion to the General Operating Fund instead. This allocation does not always mean dues will be raised by an established amount. For example, in the absence of a dues increase, the intent to make a PAC deferral from membership dues remains.