



# Building Officials Association of Florida, Inc.

## POSITION STATEMENT OPPOSING SB7000/HB901

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SB 7000/HB901 REVISES THE ADOPTION AND UPDATE PROCESS OF THE FLORIDA BUILDING CODE

**The Florida Building Code is the most advanced and comprehensive building code in the United States**, and its development and adoption process is set forth by statute to be responsive to the needs of Florida's climatic conditions while utilizing a base model code known as the International Building Code. The International Building Code family of codes published by the International Code Council was developed over several years in the late 1990's through the efforts and agreements with three former model building codes used in the United States since the 1940's. Those codes were known as the Standard Building Code, the Uniform Building Code and the Basic (National) Building Code, with each code serving various geographic regions of the country.

**Many thousands of hours** by code professionals, engineers, architects, builders, and industry representatives were expended in compiling the original three model codes into the current International Code Council family of Codes. First published in 2002, the most current version is 2015 with the 2018 edition under development through a democratic consensus process open to all stakeholders and interested parties.

### **Problematic issues created with Senate Bill 7000/HB 901:**

**Senate Bill 7000/House Bill 901 proposes to stop the advancement and automatic update of the International Codes and the National Electrical Code** by only using the currently adopted version of the Florida Building Code (6<sup>th</sup> Edition to become effective at the end of 2017), and then all future editions of the International Codes will no longer serve as the base for the Florida Building Code. The results of this action will be very detrimental to the various stakeholders in the construction industry, including building owners, designers, builders, cities, counties, code officials and citizens of Florida.

**Locking in place the current version of the International Codes** stops the potential advancement of innovation, better building systems alternatives, updates in technology, updates in standards referenced by the base code, opportunities to improve the base code and other unintended consequences, including depriving the citizens of Florida with the best building code in the United States.

**Having technical amendments submitted and added to the Florida Code every year is an administrative nightmare** for all parts the construction industry: builders, designers, code officials and product manufacturers. No one will be able to keep up with a constantly changing code and will produce a code out of sync with the fire codes.

**The latest International Code update is correlated with Florida's Fire Prevention Code** (also on a 3-year update cycle). Similar to the building code, the Florida Fire Prevention Code has the National Fire Protection Association codes as its base, and it is inconceivable that the Fire codes for Florida would ever lock in place one edition of the Fire Codes similar what is proposed here for the building code. Removing Florida's Building Code from the current 3-year cycle makes the correlation with the fire codes more difficult and over time will create an inferior building code.

**To receive financial assistance**, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires all jurisdictions experiencing floods, hurricanes and similar catastrophic events have in effect the latest International Code and Electrical Code versions. This is part of their "Public Assistance Required Minimum Standards" Policy FP-104-009-04. Florida has 35% of the Flood policies in the entire United States and is particularly at risk due storm surge during high wind events.

**The Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating system** gives credits to property insurance policy holders in communities that have adopted the most recent International Code and Electrical Code versions when rating fire and building departments. By correcting the current Florida Building Code, property casualty rates throughout the State of Florida will constantly increase, as time goes on detrimentally impacting property owners state-wide

**Training and education** courses required by the State for all code professionals, designers (engineers & architects) and building, mechanical, plumbing and electrical contractors required to maintain licensure will need to be separately modified for use in Florida due to having a base code that will progressively become out-of-date with the model International Codes over time.

**Using the copyrighted material** of the "locked in" base code with future annual technical amendments (as proposed) will become problematic and very costly to the State of Florida, unless the state writes a separate code. Writing a separate non-copyrighted Florida code will not only be exorbitantly costly but **would be a step backward** to a time 15 to 20 years ago, when states and large cities had their own separate building codes. For this reason, one unified national code (the International Family of Codes) was written, allowing designers, builders and code officials one common resource for safe, energy efficient and accessible building standards.

**Building Code Officials daily work with architects, engineers and residential designers** who also work with the International Code throughout the United States, and are therefore familiar with a majority of the provisions of the Florida Building. Moving away from the 3-year update of the International Codes and only using a separate different model code will, over time, hinder professional code enforcement and will be a loss of the beneficial qualities of using a model code that is used throughout the country. This can apply as well to general contractors in commercial construction, industry manufacturers and suppliers as well.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Oppose SB7000/HB901