

New AIA New York President Aims to Unify Chapters

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Terrence O'Neal aims to coordinate the efforts of upstate and downstate chapters.

New AIA President Outlines Plans

Terrence O'Neal, the newly installed president of the American Institute of Architects of New York State, announced a broad agenda for the chapter this year, including plans to unify the state's 13 local chapters, foster better relations between the architectural community and government, and push forth legislative initiatives to protect architects.

Principal of New York-based Terrence O'Neal Architect and the first African-American to hold the state chapter's presidency, O'Neal said he chose "One New York State" as the theme "to unify the state for our milestone year" – its 75th anniversary. O'Neal said he intends to have upstate and downstate chapters coordinate on issues such as the design implications of affordable housing, transportation

projects, and waterfront development.

O'Neal, who has served on the chapter's board of directors since 2001 and most recently chaired the association's Architects Political Action Committee, also plans to advance several legislative agenda items:

- a limited repeal of the state's Wick's Law – which requires at least four prime contractors on all public works projects – that would apply only to school projects, a strategy that O'Neal said could bring the repeal's anticipated cost savings to a popular cause and make headway for a complete repeal in the future
- adoption of a ten-year statute of repose for third-party lawsuits against architects in New York State, one of a handful of states that provides no such protection
- and passage of the Good Samaritan Act, which would grant liability protection to design professionals who provide voluntary services during disaster relief efforts.

In addition, O'Neal said he will encourage more active participation by architects in urban planning, pointing to the redevelopment of the World Trade Center as an example in which architects had a "real influence on a lot



Terrence O'Neal, the new president of the New York State chapter of the American Institute of Architects, plans to dedicate the coming year to unifying the regional subchapters and bridging the gap between architects and government.

of the big-picture planning decisions," and the redevelopment of Brooklyn as a place where architects had an active voice on local planning boards. O'Neal also suggested that architects should fill vacancies at zoning and planning boards and run for elected office.

"I think we as architects would make astute and informed elected officials," he said, adding that architects have served as council members, mayors, state representatives, and members of congress, most notably former U.S. Rep. Richard Swett, a New Hampshire Democrat who served in the early 1990s and was an outspoken advocate for the design profession.

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