ACEC National Convention

ACEC/Michigan members traveled to Washington DC in April to attend the ACEC National Convention and visit with the Michigan Congressional Delegation. Appointments were made with a majority of the Michigan members of Congress to discuss sustainable transportation funding, support for the WRDA bill and other clean water programs (SRF), and development of a nationwide energy plan.

Transportation Funding

Increasing the investment in Michigan’s transportation infrastructure was put at the top of Governor Rick Snyder’s legislative priorities during his state of the state address in January. The legislature has since been wrestling with the issue trying to find a solution that would have the support of the Republicans and Democrats alike. Many different proposals have been vetted but none have been acceptable to the majority of legislators. As a short term measure to fix some of the roads in FY 2013, the Governor and House recently agreed to set a target of $350 million from 2-year budget surplus to use for road repairs for this construction season. A long term funding solution will continue to be discussed this summer with Rep. Wayne Schmidt, Chair of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, being an integral leader in the discussion.

Representative Kurt Heise: Legislator of the Year

On May 9th, during the Michigan Engineering Conference, Rep. Kurt Heise (R-Plymouth Township) was honored as ACEC of Michigan’s Legislator of the Year. During the 2011-12 legislative session, Heise introduced – and helped to pass - HB 5466 with the goal of making overreaching indemnification clauses void and unenforceable in professional services contracts with public entities. The passage of this indemnification bill was a key victory in protecting the engineering profession. Rep. Heise was also instrumental in the passage of SB 77 in 2011 which reduced the statute of limitations for design professionals.
Senate Bill 309 was introduced by Senator Jack Brandenburg on April 11, 2013 at ACEC’s request. This affidavit of merit bill will require the plaintiff to consult with a third-party design professional to review the facts of the claims and make a determination about whether or not the accusations have merit or if they are of a frivolous nature. Once an affidavit (or certificate) has been filed with the court declaring that the third-party design professional, based on their review of the allegations, believes that there is a sufficient basis in the contract or in law for commencement of the action, the case is permitted to move forward. The bill has been referred to the Senate Judiciary committee chaired by Senator Rick Jones.

House Bill 4585 was introduced by Representative Robert VerHeulen on April 18, 2013. The bill would modify the occupational code to allow design professionals to seal drawings with an electronic seal. Many states already allow electronic seal procedures which result in more efficient and less costly transfer of design documents. The bill has been referred to the House Regulatory Reform committee chaired by Rep. Hugh Crawford.