

President's Message on HB202

HB 202 cleared committee yesterday with a do pass recommendation. The vote was 11 to 6 in favor. Make no mistake about it we have our work cut out for us. This bill has the support of the Building and Contractors Association, The Board of Realtors and the Banking Institution. It is imperative that fire commissioners take the time to contact their local representatives. This bill could end up on the floor of the house with voting taking place within a week so we must act with utmost speed. Please make an effort to communicate with your local representatives in a personal manner. Let them know that this bill is not the way to solve those problems that have occurred in a couple of areas across the state. Ask them to share their ideas with you on how we can improve the present situation and then get that suggestion into the ISFCA office at office @isfca.org. If you know a reporter with your local paper, call them and ask them to give this bill some exposure. Virtually every citizen I have talked to has expressed disbelief that this could be happening.

We made our case for the need to establish a fire code board. This board would function to adopt those portions of the IFC and pass those recommendations onto the State Fire Marshal for implementation. We also envision this board as an appeals board to deal with situations that cannot be resolved at the local level. This concept seemed to meet with favor with several of the committee members and I believe we swayed a couple of extra votes in our favor by suggesting this concept. We feel strongly that this legislation will not solve the problem. It allows for cities and counties to adopt those portions of the IFC they wish to enforce and then contract with the state fire marshal for inspections. The fire marshal will have to then go to the very same people now doing the inspections because there are no other trained professionals available. This could possibly make the situation even worse because it removes the local fire commissioners from the process. In so doing the local fire marshals will have even more freedom than they currently have, i.e. no oversight by the local fire commissioners, and even more conflict could be the end result. In the meantime ISFCA will be exploring our options on how to proceed and we will inform you of our plan once it is developed.

To assist you with finding out who your particular legislators are please click on the link <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/> to get to the Idaho Legislature's home page. Then, in the left-hand column click on "Idaho Legislators," and then click on "Who's My Legislator?" and then click on "Zip Code Search." This will bring you to a screen where you can enter your zip code and then select "Current Officials." That screen will list the state legislators in your area. Please write down their names and then click back to the Idaho Legislature home page. Then, in the left-hand column click on "How to Contact Legislators" and then click on "Contact by Name." Then you enter the Legislator's last name, click search and your legislator's name appears. Double-click on your legislator's name and an e-mail box opens for that legislator and you can fill out the box, type in your message and click on "Submit E-mail." Please do this for each legislator in your area.

Sincerely,

Tim Vargas, ISFCA President