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Build with Strength Joins with Local Leaders to Call on Georgia State Senate to Reject Bill That Would Restrict Communities from Strengthening Their Building Codes

State Senator John Albers, Sandy Springs Mayor Rusty Paul, Fire Chief Keith Sanders, and P.E. Steve Skalko Decry Effort That Would Weaken Building and Fire Safety, Limit Local Choice

Sandy Springs, GA – Standing in front of the fire engines and trucks that serve Sandy Springs, Georgia, local leaders – including State Senator John Albers (R-56), Sandy Springs' Mayor Rusty Paul and Fire Chief Keith Sanders, and P.E. Steve Skalko of Macon – spoke to the press on Friday in opposition to statewide legislation that would prevent Georgia cities and towns from enacting local measures to strengthen their building codes for, in part, because of fire and safety concerns.

The Georgia House of Representatives [recently passed House Bill 876](#), and the State Senate is now considering the measure.

“This legislation is very concerning for the safety of our fellow Georgians and first responders. I call on my colleagues to join me in opposing this bill,” said Senator John Albers, the Chairman of Public Safety. “State government should not be in the business of dictating terms that prevent local communities like Sandy Springs and others from making their communities a better place to live.”

In addition to the fire and building safety concerns, the bill is being derided as a threat to local autonomy, as it would rescind a [2016 ordinance](#) passed by the Sandy Springs City Council, which amended the city's building codes to include new requirements that prohibit combustible materials from being used in certain building elements with the aim of providing increased building quality, sustainability, durability, and longevity.

“I come from a family of tree farmers. I know the value and appreciate the many uses for wood in the community,” said Sandy Springs Mayor Rusty Paul. “The City's ordinance was decided based on one key objective: public safety. We've seen the difference a material choice can have in slowing down the spread of a fire, and it is truly a life-saving decision.”

The desire to strengthen local building codes isn't limited to Sandy Springs. According to [polling conducted in September 2016](#), Georgia voters are highly supportive of Sandy Springs' ordinance (96% support), and were in favor of their own city passing similar regulations by overwhelming margins (94% support). The poll of 400 registered voters living in Georgia was commissioned by Build with Strength, a coalition of the National Ready Mixed Concrete

Association consisting of fire service professionals, engineers, architects, industry experts and community organizations committed to strengthening the nation's building codes and ensuring residents have access to safe and secure housing.

Over the last several months, there have been a number of spectacular fires in wood-frame, multi-family residential structures – most recently in [Los Angeles, CA](#); [Middletown, CT](#); [Princeton, NJ](#); [East Boston, MA](#); [Lakewood, NJ](#); [Weymouth, MA](#); [Haverhill, MA](#); [Waltham, MA](#); [Charlotte, NC](#); and [Warner Robins, GA](#). There have been [dozens over the last few years](#).

“The fact remains that wood-frame structures are more combustible and faster to collapse than traditional masonry construction. From the construction period onward, wood-frame construction for multi-storied buildings presents increased risk for the men and women who must fight those fires. I implore the state legislature to look beyond the special interests of commercial industry and allow the city to retain its focus on protecting the safety of not only the general public, but in deference to our firefighters,” added Sandy Springs Fire Chief Keith Sanders.

Learn more at www.buildwithstrength.com.

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