

Stop the Timber Innovation Act Coalition

October 15, 2018

Dear ICC Members:

The members of the Stop the Timber Innovation Act Coalition write in strong opposition to code proposal G-108-18. We object to the establishment of code provisions that allow for the construction of wood buildings above 85 feet. Whether as a matter of federal policy or building code, tall wood buildings are unproven, untested and unsound.

Our coalition represents a broad group of trade, construction and labor interests opposed to federal legislation and policy that unfairly promotes, at taxpayer expense, one building material over another in the construction materials marketplace.

We have specifically opposed the establishment of a Tall Wood Building Prize Competition to award taxpayer funded prizes for the design and construction of tall wood buildings. The tall wood buildings that code proposal G-108-18 would support are similar to those promoted by the Tall Wood Building Prize Competition.

In 2015, the US Department of Agriculture, without authorization from Congress, hosted a Tall Wood Building Prize Competition, awarding two tall wood building projects with a taxpayer-funded prize. One of these projects was based in New York City, the other in Portland, Oregon. Both projects have since been scrapped. The New York City project was opposed by public safety interests and officially canceled in 2017. Earlier this year, the Framework project in Portland was also canceled. These projects represent an irresponsible waste of taxpayer funds on building technology that is untested and unsound.

On August 13, 2018, the Associated Press reported the collapse of critical components of a mass timber building at Oregon State University. The collapse was precipitated by unforeseen problems with the glue used in a panel of cross laminated timber (CLT). Upon full examination, 85 panels were designated as unsound.

This news report underscores just one of the many concerns that should prevent the adoption of G-108-18. Uncertainty around the lack standardization of adhesives used in CLT panels, the performance of lamination during fires, and CLT response to water accumulation resulting from fire sprinkler system discharge – accidental or emergency – should give pause to policymakers and model codes arbiters alike.

In 2016, the International Code Council Committee wisely rejected proposals to increase the high limit of floors for timber buildings to nine stories and 100 feet by an 87% vote. The technology behind this proposal, as behind the proposals in 2016, remains uncertain, untested and likely unsound.

Our coalition respectfully requests the Committee reject G-108-18.

Sincerely,

Members of the Stop the Timber Innovation Act Coalition

American Concrete Pavement Association
American Concrete Pipe Association
American Concrete Pumping Association
American Institute of Steel Construction
ArcelorMittal
Ash Grove Cement Company
CalPortland
Cemex
Concrete Foundations Association
Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute
CRH Americas Materials, Inc.
International Concrete Repair Institute
International Council of Employers of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers
LafargeHolcim
Lehigh Hanson
Mason Contractors Association of America
National Concrete Masonry Association
National Electrical Contractors Association
National Ready Mixed Concrete Association
National Steel Bridge Association
National Stone Sand and Gravel Association
Nucor
Portland Cement Association
Southeast Concrete Masonry Association
Steel Framing Industry Association
Steel Manufacturers Association
United Brotherhood of Carpenters
Vulcan Materials