



CITY OF EAST LANSING

The Home of Michigan State University

One thing I have learned over the years working with building codes is that fire can't recognize the difference between a tax and spend liberal or a tea party conservative. And it can't tell the difference between a house built by a member of the home builders association or a guy and his buddies working on nights and weekends. It treats them all the same. All fire knows is whether or not things are in place that will keep it from starting; or if it starts, from spreading quickly.

It's the same with other dangers that would invade the places we live, work, shop and play: electrical shock, water contamination, building collapse don't care about the politics in Lansing—they just care if systems are in place to keep them in control.

I don't care about politics either—I just want reasonable cost effective safety measures we know will save lives and property to be put in place. Shame on anyone who would put making political points over safety of our buildings.

Another thing I've learned is that construction technology is changing far more rapidly than most realize. Most materials used to frame houses today weren't around when I first began as a carpenter. OSB, TJI's, LVL beams and headers are ubiquitous today but didn't exist and the codes didn't address them back then. New kinds of water and gas piping that were not around 10 years ago are widely in use today. The building supply industry is constantly making new products that work better, cheaper, or both.

I urge you to remember this one thing from this testimony: these new materials and methods of construction are not only better than what we used to use, but they also allow builders to build at lower cost and let buildings be more efficient and cheaper to operate and maintain. It is foolish to change code adoptions in a way that will delay the use of new products and methods of construction, to harm manufactures and suppliers of building products, and make building owners have less efficient and more costly buildings over the price of a code book.

I am concerned that some may try to misinform you that code changes cost money. Most changes are cost neutral or actually allow products and methods that save money. You can prove this for yourself. Take a look on the web at the code change proposals being discussed right now. Every proposal has to state how the change will affect the cost of construction. By far most have no impact on cost. Those that cost more will have to show the benefit to the public is worth the cost before they will be adopted.

Please don't think this code book thing is a simple issue. It has far ranging impacts. It is not just the health and safety of those of us who use buildings who are impacted. The HBA is only one small group out of all who will be affected.

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