



**AIA**  
New York

February 6, 2020

President Donald Trump  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue North West  
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. President:

We are writing on behalf of the American Institute of Architects New York, a nearly 6,000 member association of architects and designers based in New York City. We are deeply troubled to learn that a draft executive order is circulating among White House staff that, if signed by you, would officially designate “classical” architecture as the preferred style of all federal courthouses, all federal public buildings in the Capital region, and all other federal public buildings whose cost exceeds \$50 million.

We strongly and unequivocally oppose this policy to promote any one style of architecture for federal buildings across the country. Classical architecture has tremendous value, but so do other architectural styles. Depending on the needs of the community—including regional preferences, topography, weather, the style of surrounding buildings, the history of the community—a different approach may be much more appropriate. The top-down approach designated by this order will effectively cut local community voices out of the design process.

Other considerations for the design approach proposed by an architectural team include cost of materials and constructability, the environmental impact of building materials, requirements for implementation of modern building systems, and long-term efficiencies of building operations. These complex issues require diverse architectural solutions.

We agree our federal buildings should evoke respect; but that respect comes from the power of our system of self-government. Federal buildings should incorporate local design preferences and different regional cultural histories. Ultimately, the architecture should be designed with input of, by, and for the people whom it directly serves. Historically, the imposition of a single architectural style has set a dangerous precedent, representing an assault on a free and open society.

We urge you to reject this draft executive order and not pursue any policy change that would replace local input within the design process with a predetermined national directive.

Sincerely,

Kim Yao, AIA  
2020 President, American Institute of Architects New York Chapter

**The American Institute of Architects**

AIA New York  
536 LaGuardia Place  
New York, NY 10012

T (212) 683 0023

F (212) 696 5022

[www.aiany.org](http://www.aiany.org)

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