

Testimony in Opposition of Regulating Interior Design Practitioners
07/09/2007

*Testimony of Bill Vernon, NFIB/Massachusetts State Director
In Opposition to House Bill No. 3209, House Bill No. 341, and Senate Bill No. 178,
Legislation to Regulate Interior Design Practitioners
Before the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure*

Chairman Morrissey, Chairman Rodrigues and Members of the Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee:

My name is Bill Vernon. I am the Massachusetts director of the National Federation of Independent Business. A non-profit, non-partisan organization, NFIB is the nation's and our state's largest small-business advocacy group. In Massachusetts, NFIB represents thousands of small- and independent-business owners involved in all types of industry, including manufacturing, retail, wholesale, service and agriculture. The average NFIB member has five employees and annual gross revenues of about \$450,000. In short, NFIB represents the small, Main Street business owners from across our state. On behalf of those entrepreneurs and small- and independent-business owners, I urge you to oppose House Bill Nos. 3209 and 341, and Senate Bill No. 178, legislation to regulate the interior design business.

Licensing requirements are by their nature barriers to entry for entrepreneurs. In fact, licensing requirements are designed and promoted by their advocates as barriers to entry for new practitioners. On bills to require state licensure of any profession or business, the issue for legislators to consider is whether the health or safety of the public is endangered or whether quality is not ensured by failure to regulate the business through licensing requirements. The proposed imposition of state licensing requirements for the interior design business clearly fails this test.

Interior design has historically encompassed a wide diversity of practitioners responding to a wide range of consumer demands for services. These legislative proposals would replace that market with a "one size fits all" structure that demands strict adherence to formal standards of a four-year degree with the proper concentration plus board certification after an examination. These requirements, produced and promoted by industry elites, would be imposed without any appreciable evidence of consumer demand or need for government protection to the economic detriment of many, including practitioners, consumers and the Massachusetts economy as a whole.

These bills would impose new, additional costs on individual interior designers who would be forced to pay for licensure, on taxpayers who would have to fund the bureaucracy required to regulate the industry, and on consumers whose supply of interior designers would dissipate while prices for design services would increase. In short, a lose-lose-lose situation.

These proposals are a solution looking for a problem. NFIB believes strongly that the state has many, many real and substantial problems that need to be addressed by government. The regulation and licensure of the person freely hired to give advice as to the color of the drapes or walls or the purchase and placement of furniture in the home or office is not one of them.