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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Wisconsin Builders Association Responds to Continued False Claims Made by Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association Regarding the Expansion of Certain Electrical Devices in Newly Constructed One and Two Family Homes

No Loss of Safety, Just Loss of Money for Wisconsin Families

Madison, WI (March 7, 2017) -- In response to the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association (WSFCA) continued campaign against sensible, data-driven code changes regarding the expansion of certain electrical devices in newly constructed one and two family homes in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Builders Association (WBA) would like to provide Wisconsin families with accurate data regarding the current safety of new homes in the state.

The WBA would also like to dispel costly, politically-motivated rhetoric that has little to do with the security of Wisconsin homeowners and more to do with unsubstantiated and unnecessary regulatory overreach that costs them money.

The electrical code update as currently presented by the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) ensures the modernization and continued safety of new homes in Wisconsin. In fact, Wisconsin took the lead in reviewing the state electrical code and is well ahead of most states in the review process.

According to the DSPS, "Less than 1% of the changes from the 2014 and 2017 editions of the National Electrical Code (NEC) would not be incorporated into Wisconsin's Electrical Code," meaning that over 99% of the recommended code changes have been adopted by DSPS and are supported by the WBA.

The less than 1% of changes not adopted into the current electrical code update, including the expansion of AFCI and GFCI requirements, were not included by DSPS precisely because the latest reputable data on the subject does not make a compelling argument to justify the additional cost burden for Wisconsin families. Similar amendments to recommended AFCI and GFCI provisions in the NEC have been made by 21 other states.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) referenced by the [WSFCA's press release](#) to support their position for device expansion does not hold true when filtering out data that is not relevant to this debate. For example, the NFPA study's methodology does not look solely at fires that AFCIs are designed to protect against, but instead included all fires where some type of electrical failure or malfunction was the cause.

Besides this, the WSFCA ignores that the adoption of AFCIs in the NEC was largely based on misinformation, which persists to the present. The initial reports compiled by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) were later shown to have grossly exaggerated the number of instances where AFCIs were needed and discard any data that suggested AFCIs would have a minimal benefit.

Most importantly, the types of electrical issues that AFCIs can best address most often occur in homes that are more than 20 years old (a [1987 CPSC epidemiological study](#) found that 85% of fires of electrical origin occur in homes that are more than 20 years old). These old homes were built using older standards of the electrical code, with issues that have since been addressed in new home construction that greatly reduce the number of similar fires in such homes, even as they age. (CONTINUED PAGE 2.)

Despite evidence that an expansion of these devices would not be necessary, the WSFCA contends that the cost is nominal, and therefore worth it. However, while the cost may seem small in comparison to the cost of a new home, it is important to remember the cumulative effect these additional regulations have on the cost of housing. A [2016 NAHB report](#) discovered that, on average, regulations imposed by government at all levels account for almost a quarter of the final price of a new single-family home. Increasing these costs for superfluous reasons only hurts homebuyers in Wisconsin.

The WBA is deeply committed to the safety of homeowners. A few years ago, we worked with a [diverse coalition](#) that included those in fire service to successfully advance a [bipartisan bill](#) requiring all new Wisconsin homes to have combination smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

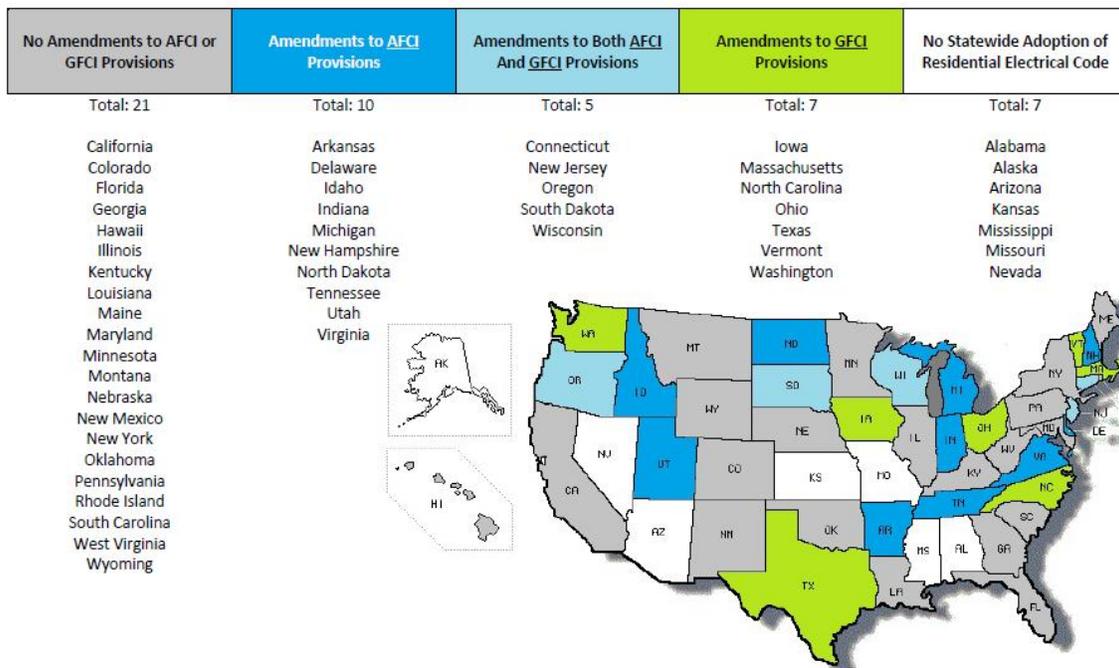
Our association consists of credentialed, above-board expert contractors committed to keeping Wisconsin families safe; we support and adopt measures when the science proves they are necessary, and we avoid charging homeowners needlessly when they are not. That is why 175 WBA members recently showed their support for the current electrical code draft during three public hearings and the public comment period in late January and early February. The WBA has worked for years to make sure homes remain safe and affordable for Wisconsin families, and we will continue to do so.

Governor Walker and the DSPS have done a great job in the past of supporting sensible updates to building codes that protect the health and safety of Wisconsin families, and we look forward to working with them on the implementation of the current draft of the electrical code in 2017.

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Amendments to AFCI and GFCI Provisions



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