

Local Building Codes

HB 628 by Representative Mary Littleton
House State Government Subcommittee

SB 620 by Senator Jim Tracy
Senate Commerce Committee

THE ISSUE

The State Fire Marshal adopted the 2006 International Building Code and 2009 International Residential Code as **minimum standards** for construction in Tennessee to protect the safety of its residents. The purpose of nationally recognized model building codes is the protection of lives. National building codes are updated periodically as the direct result of information learned from structural collapses and other failures.

HB 628/SB 620, as introduced, would allow exempt jurisdictions, which include the major cities in Tennessee, **to adopt codes for commercial and residential construction which are less stringent than the code adopted by the State Fire Marshal** as the minimum standard for construction in the state. This bill also removes the requirement that exempt jurisdictions would be audited at least once every three years to verify adequate enforcement.

Tennessee designers work on projects across the state and the country. The issues of compatibility, consistency, and ease of use in code enforcement all serve to protect the public more effectively.

Absent minimum safety standards and oversight by the state, exempt jurisdictions may adopt codes proposed by influential business interests. During a natural disaster such as a tornado, flooding or earthquake, these same building codes are designed to protect the public. Whether in a commercial building or a personal residence, the result is saving lives – whether the building code is invoked due to a building renovation or required by new construction.

KEY POINTS

- Building codes are **minimum** standards designed to save lives, not to protect property investments.
- The State Architects' and Engineers' Board opposes HB 628/SB 620 in the interest of public safety.

ACTION REQUESTED

- **oppose HB 628/SB 620** and any effort to weaken codes requirements for design and construction