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Gas industry weakens efficiency, environmental standards in international building code used by U.S. states, undercutting International Code Council credibility

Efficiency of buildings is becoming increasingly important as climate extremes intensify; ICC 'breaks trust' with consumers, leaving them with higher energy bills, costly future retrofits

Despite 90% support from ICC committees for 2024 IECC standard, ICC folds to industry pressure, weakens quality construction code

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The International Code Council (ICC) yesterday announced it has established updated building standards, incorporating several gas industry appeals that remove electric-ready measures from the base code. As originally proposed, the 2024 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) received overwhelming support and was designed to ensure all new homes and buildings in jurisdictions that use the IECC are highly efficient and built for a future in which electric technologies like heat pumps are standard. However, as a result of gas industry lobbying and influence, the final IECC base code was stripped of electrification-ready measures such as EV charging, solar and electric appliance readiness. The IECC is referenced by 40 states and most major cities in the US.

In response to yesterday's announcement, energy, climate and public advocate organizations issued the following responses:

"RMI is disappointed in the ICC Board's last-minute vote against widely-supported building code measures that would make energy efficiency, solar, and EV charging more affordable and accessible for homeowners and businesses. This last-minute decision in favor of small interests has eroded trust in the ICC's standard-setting process and is an affront to its own staff experts and the IECC consensus committee. Ultimately, this reversal will set the US building sector back years in providing more energy savings, resilience, and quality-of-life benefits that energy efficiency and electrification deliver."

Jonny Kocher, building decarbonization expert, RMI

“We are deeply disappointed that the ICC Board failed to respect its own process, choosing instead to support the narrow interests of the gas and multi-family building industries. By removing energy-saving provisions from the main body of the 2024 IECC, the board has gone against the will of over 90% of its members, and demonstrated that the ICC cannot be trusted with the responsibility to oversee US building code standards. It is especially ironic that they chose to remove EV readiness provisions on the same day that the EPA announced the strongest-ever pollution standards for cars. Twenty-first century buildings must be cost-effective, healthy and climate-resilient: it’s time to move to a new oversight body to develop vitally-needed model energy building codes.”

Vanessa Warheit and Linda Hutchins-Knowles, Co-Leads, EV Charging for All Coalition

“We are surprised and dismayed that the ICC did not follow its own process by not discarding unfounded appeals of key 2024 IECC code provisions. In doing so, the ICC lost its leadership to provide critical guidance on standards that cities and states needed to meet air quality, efficiency and electrification goals.”

Guy Hall, Policy Team, Electric Vehicle Association

“We are deeply disappointed with ICC’s decision to overrule its own consensus process and uphold the appeals. Allowing the voices of just a few organizations who were unhappy with the resultant code to overturn the results—which represented a compromise among dozens of individuals and their organizations—undermines the integrity of the IECC. While this is a setback, we will not allow this occurrence to deter us in our work towards high performing buildings and efficient and resilient homes for all.”

Amy Boyce, Senior Director, Building and Energy Performance, Institute for Market Transformation

“New Buildings Institute is deeply concerned by the ICC Board’s decision to uphold components of the appeals made to the draft 2024 IECC to remove key building decarbonization measures from the model code. These proven measures are needed to provide jurisdictions with the tools they need to meet their climate goals in the built environment and create climate resilient communities. This ICC Board decision went against the recommendation of their own staff and Appeals Board and moreover disregarded over three years of work by 2024 IECC Consensus Committees. This decision calls into question the credibility of the ICC and its ability to facilitate a fair process.”

Ben Rabe, Project Manager, New Buildings Institute

“The ICC has long been regarded for its timely and expert guidance in new energy technologies. However, the Board of Directors’ appeal has made the 2024 IECC code obsolete in the face of the urgent need of the decarbonization of our buildings. With several states and dozens of cities already implementing EV-ready building codes, the ICC’s ongoing delay in crucial electrification provisions poses significant risks to public health, the climate, and cost-savings.”

Neda Deylami, Vehicle Electrification Manager, Environmental Defense Fund

“As a voting member of the Residential Consensus Committee, hearing the news today about the ICC Board of Directors’ decision to uphold appeals filed by the gas industry was a huge slap in the face. We worked for three years and invested thousands of hours working with diverse stakeholders to build consensus and achieve the ICC’s stated mission: ‘to help our communities increase energy efficiency and also reduce greenhouse emissions (GHG) to meet their policy goals.’ While the ICC claims to be Leading the Way to Energy Efficiency, the action taken by their Board of Directors absolutely do not put us on their promised ‘Path Forward’ to ‘confront a changing climate.’ The decision represents a win for business-as-usual and a loss for future generations affected by climate change.”

Gayathri Vijayakumar, Principal Mechanical Engineer, Steven Winter Associates, Inc.

“The ICC board has gone against scientific evidence when they removed the energy-saving provisions. The need to power all new buildings with electricity from increasingly renewable sources, instead of fossil fuels, to combat the climate crisis and protect public health has never been greater. Last year was the warmest in history. That’s why the EPA’s clean car standards, that the ICC board opposed, are also critically important. A 2013 report analyzing 41 different studies concluded that children living in homes with gas stoves that produce methane, face a 42 percent higher risk of having asthma and developing lifelong illnesses. Burning gas in buildings also releases a number of hazardous air pollutants like benzene, a known carcinogen. Buildings need to be fully electric to protect our people and planet.”

Christian Brock, CEO, Elected Officials to Protect America

“Drive Electric Dayton is extremely disappointed with the decision of the ICC Board of Directors to remove critical additions to the 2024-2025 ICC code. The people who will suffer the most from these decisions are minorities and residents of underserved communities who can least afford the expensive electrical system retrofits that will be required in the future. The ICC Board of Directors has put the political aspirations of certain politicians and exorbitant profits of gas and oil companies ahead of the health and the economic well-being of the American people. Drive Electric Dayton encourages the ICC Board of Directors to reconsider its decision of the legally negotiated rulings and to restore ... the critical additions to the 2024-2025 ICC Code.”

Rap Hankins, President, Drive Electric Dayton

“The International Code Council bent over backward to accommodate a few powerful industries, calling into question the organization’s legitimacy. When the International Code Council broke its own rules to hear appeals from special interests, we thought the code council had reached its nadir. But the board’s last-minute decision to go against the people they selected and the process they themselves stood up represents a new low. Not only can we not take the International Code Council seriously as a partner in achieving the level of building energy performance we need, but it also cannot even be considered an honest administrator of its own processes. Perhaps most disappointing is the ICC board’s disregard for the high retrofit costs they have decided to stick homeowners and businesses with in the future.”

Michael Waite, director of codes and building standards, American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE)

At the eleventh hour, the ICC board has voted to throw away years of work, negotiation, and compromise to placate a handful of special interests. In doing so, they ignored the ICC's own experts and its Appeals Board. The 2024 IECC code would have lowered energy bills for consumers, reduced climate pollution, and increased access to efficient electric appliances. This decision calls the entire ICC process into question, but make no mistake: electrification is the future and the work will continue.

Joe Vukovich, staff attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council

"NEMA is extremely disappointed in last night's announcement that the International Code Council's (ICC) Board of Directors has granted the special interests' appeals of the 2024 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC).

"The announcement is the unfortunate end to a protracted process that will impede access to efficient, energy resilient, high-performing homes and businesses. Openness, transparency, and consensus are cornerstones of the code and standards development process. This decision flies in the face of those principles and is a stark example of how a select few can overturn the desire of many.

"To be clear, the 2024 IECC went through an extensive development cycle with a multitude of opportunities to present ideas, offer input, and raise concerns. The end result was a national model energy code inclusive of measures to further advance home and business owners' access to energy-saving technologies and was *approved overwhelmingly by the ICC committees*.

"NEMA supported and participated in a robust appeals process in the interest of fairness and due process. We were pleased to see the four-person ICC Appeals Board *recommended unanimously* to dismiss all the appeals.

"With this decision, the ICC Board of Directors has unilaterally overturned the will of the IECC review committees, ICC membership, and the ICC Appeals Board, a result that diminishes the energy efficiency and decarbonization gains that would have been achieved by the code."

Patrick Hughes, Senior Vice President, Strategy, Technical, and Industry Affairs, National Electrical Manufacturers Association