The U.S. Access Board is an independent federal agency devoted to accessibility for people with disabilities. Created in 1973 to ensure access to federally funded facilities, today it develops and maintains accessible design criteria for the built environment as well as transit vehicles, telecommunications equipment, and electronic and information technology. Among its many activities, the Board developed the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities, published in 1991, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADA–ABA Accessibility Guidelines), published in 2004, and provides technical assistance and training on their requirements.

The Access Board is structured to function as a coordinating body among federal agencies and to directly represent the public, particularly people with disabilities. Half of its membership is made up of representatives from federal departments and the other half is comprised of public representatives appointed by the President, the majority of whom have a disability.

One of ICC’s driving goals is to work with the Access Board on coordination between the International Codes and the ADA–ABA Accessibility Guidelines. As with achieving safe harbor status with the federal Fair Housing Act, realization of this goal will significantly increase the level of accessibility within the built environment across the nation.
The Code Council would like to congratulate one of the newest members appointed to the Access Board: City of West Palm Beach, Florida Construction Services Department Director Neil K. Melick, CBO. A licensed Florida Building Code Administrator and a Florida State Certified Building Contractor, Melick has also served as Chair of the Florida Accessibility Advisory Council since 2003 and is a member of the Florida Building Commission Accessibility Technical Advisory Committee. In addition, he previously chaired the Building Code Advisory Board of Palm Beach County, of which he remains a member, and is a former President of the Building Officials Association of Palm Beach County.

He has also served as Vice Chairman of the ICC International Building Code Interpretations Committee, as Chairman of the ICC Structural Action Committee and on the Southern Building Code Congress International Codes Interpretation Committee.

We would also like to take this opportunity to recognize two Access Board members for their ongoing involvement in the development of the International Codes and ICC A117.1: Tricia Mason and Joseph A. Cirillo, RA.

Mason was appointed to the Access Board by President Bush in 2005 and was elected its Chair in 2007. A former President of Little People of America, she served as its representative to the ANSI Accredited Standards Committee A117 on Architectural Features and Site Design of Public Buildings and Residential Structures for Persons with Disabilities. Mason is originally from Cheyenne, Wyoming, where she chaired the Mayor’s Council for People with Disabilities and served on the Statewide Independent Living Council. Before moving to Arlington, Virginia, she was employed by the Governor’s Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Wyoming Business Leadership Network.

Cirillo has the unique distinction of being the first Rhode Island State Building Commissioner, a position he held for twenty-eight years. In this capacity, he was instrumental in the adoption and implementation of the Rhode Island State Building Code, and in 1980 took a leadership role in ensuring access for people with disabilities to state buildings through a survey and retrofit program involving over 1,200 facilities. Cirillo began his career as a Registered Architect with the U.S. Navy, designing facilities around the world, and later entered private practice. He is a former President of the Building Officials and Code Administrators International and the National Conference of States on Building Codes and Standards. Appointed to the Board in 2006, Cirillo recently was elected Chair of its Planning and Evaluation Committee.

ICC thanks all of the members of the Access Board for their past and present contributions to accessibility.