

REFORM BUILDING CODES AND LEED RULES

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TOPLINE: Burdensome building codes and mandatory green-certification requirements add to the costs of new homes. States should slow the cycle of required code updates, make green certifications voluntary, and prohibit federal energy-code overreach.

BACKGROUND: Government regulations now add [\\$131,734](#) to the price of the average new home (26.4% of the total) according to estimates from the National Association of Home Builders, including nearly [\\$38,000](#) per home from changes to building codes over the past five years. The 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) alone can add an estimated [\\$20,000-\\$31,000](#) per home, and many states impose similarly stringent building-energy codes.

Action Items (Congress, States and Localities):

- States and localities should **require an affordability review before adopting any new model building or energy code**.
- States and localities should make Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and other **green-building certifications voluntary** (rather than mandatory) for permitting, public housing, and tax incentives.
- Congress should permanently **codify the rescission of the 2021 IECC/ASHRAE 90.1 energy standards** as a condition of federally backed financing for new construction and prohibit similar mandates.
 - HUD and USDA had imposed this code on FHA- and USDA-backed mortgages for new construction.

How It Would Make Life More Affordable:

- Code changes add tens of thousands of dollars to the price of the average new home.
- Bipartisan single-stairway [reforms](#) in Texas, Colorado, and Montana cut small-apartment construction costs by 6-13% with no measurable increase in fire risk.
- Eliminating mandatory LEED certification would save roughly [\\$19,000](#) per "affordable" unit.

Related Legislation or Proposals: [Texas S.B. 2835](#) and [Colorado H.B. 25-1273](#) (single-stairway reform, 2025); [California A.B. 130/A.B. 306](#) (six-year building-code freeze, 2025); HUD-USDA [rescission](#) of the 2021 IECC/ASHRAE 90.1-2019 mandate (April 2026).

BOTTOMLINE: Overly prescriptive building codes and green-certification mandates can add tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of new housing, often with little benefit. States should pause or roll back excessive code requirements and end energy-efficiency mandates, while Congress should roll back delegated regulatory authority over federal energy codes.