

NSPE Position Statement No. 07-02—Recognition of the Engineering Function Within Government

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NSPE Contact: Board of Directors

Professional Policy Supported: 07-Government

It is the policy of the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) to support public recognition of the importance of the practice of engineering by licensed professional engineers in federal, state, and local agencies through the establishment of appropriate organizational structures at all levels of government.

NSPE recommends that government officials having the authority for hiring or appointment, recognize the importance of the engineering function within the government departments and agencies through the selection of fully qualified licensed professional engineers to positions having responsibility for making engineering decisions and exercising engineering judgment.

The practice of appointing nonengineer administrators to positions to perform functions which, by definition, constitute the practice of engineering, has accelerated at an alarming pace throughout all levels of government. This practice (a) is inconsistent with the goal of state engineering licensing laws to protect the public health and safety, (b) should be discontinued, and (c) appropriately credentialed professional engineers should be appointed to these positions. As an alternative, those duties that constitute the practice of engineering should be reassigned to a position which requires a professional engineering license.

While NSPE supports licensed professional engineers in government and recognizes that these professionals must be encouraged to perform functions that continually hone their professional and technical capabilities, it is the further position of NSPE that governmental entities perform their core functions without competing directly with licensed professionals in the private sector. It is recommended that governmental entities and the professionals and other staff of these entities be precluded from submitting or otherwise competing, directly or indirectly, for projects that are performable by the private sector, except as necessary to maintain their competency for their core governmental functions.