



# It's not just rainwater in California

**A**nd you thought Obama and Boehner couldn't get along? The code battles continue in California over a rainwater catchment bill.

As we reported in our June 2011 issue, California AB 275 would enact the Rainwater Capture Act of 2011, which would allow residential, commercial, and governmental landowners to install, maintain and operate rain barrels and rainwater capture systems.

The bill currently references the Green Plumbing & Mechanical Code Supplement, an overlay to the Uniform Plumbing Code and the Uniform Mechanical Code, published by the International Association of Plumbing & Mechanical Officials.

The legislation states that property owners can install a rain barrel system, if the system is used only to supply water for outdoor, non-potable uses; a rainwater capture system for outdoor non-potable use or infiltration into groundwater; or a rainwater capture system for indoor non-potable use, as long as the system complies with specific health and safety requirements.

The bill would require the system to include supplemental filtration, a disinfection device, or both or some other process or device that performs an equivalent function as determined

by the local agency having jurisdiction. A "disinfection device" could be defined as a pressure filter, chlorination or ultraviolet radiation.

If the system is connected to the potable water supply to provide a backup water supply, the rainwater reuse system must be equipped with an appropriate backflow prevention device.

The International Code Council has been trying — unsuccessfully — to get the rainwater recovery provisions in

its International Green Construction Code included in the law. Now the ICC has sent a lengthy letter to Sen. Joe Simitian, chairman of the California Senate Standing Committee on Environmental Quality, saying that it opposes AB 275 and will actively lobby against it.

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ICC says that the Green Plumbing & Mechanical Code Supplement is not a code, as required under California law, and that the Rainwater Capture Act of 2011 would not survive a court challenge. They say that the Green Supplement has health and safety deficiencies, including algae control, backflow prevention, tank safety, vermin protection and seismic restraint. ICC also points out flaws in the way the author wrote the bill. There's a section that mentions disconnecting a downspout from the sewer system even though the California Plumbing Code prohibits connections to a sewer system.

IAPMO fired back in a letter with the subtitle "The Real Facts."

"The IAPMO GPMCS rainwater stan-

neering, Indianapolis, and the past president of the American Rainwater Catchment Association. The GTC is not without its expertise.

I think it's personal. I may be wrong. I know I'll be getting e-mails and phone calls telling me I'm wrong, that it's all based on science and engineering. I can hear them now. The thing is, all of these guys who work for the code groups have been in the industry for years and they all know each other. I like and respect all of them. But they're highly competitive and they all want to be right.

California needs water, and clean, safe rainwater recovery is one way to do it. It's possible to write legislation that will actually get this done. Issues in the bill about health and safety can be fixed.

California is going to retain the Uniform Plumbing Code. State government agencies, the California Pipe Trades Council and IAPMO are so intertwined that one would be hard pressed to think of a way for IAPMO to screw it up. I once heard political analyst Charlie Cook say, "Georgia wouldn't elect a Democrat if the Republicans nominated General Sherman." Same thing. California's spoken for. It's not going to adopt the I-Codes. I know they won't, but ICC should get over California. **C**

dards address cross-connection, vector control and other plumbing code health, safety and consistency issues that can arise when using rainwater for indoor, non-potable uses," the Association says. "These standards would be superseded when the California Building Standards Commission adopts the 2012 IAPMO Uniform Plumbing Code (which will contain essentially the same standards)."

I go to most of the IAPMO Green Technical Committee meetings. A member of the GTC is Bob Boulware, P.E., president of Design-Aire Engi-