Washington, DC 20515

September 3, 2008

Dear Senators, Committee Chairs, Senate Officers, Support Offices, and Staff:

The month of August was one of major activity for the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), including readying the Capitol Visitor Center for its public opening on December 2, 2008.

Included in these activities has been preparing numerous statues from the National Statuary Hall Collection for relocation from the U.S. Capitol Building, and moving them into the Capitol Visitor Center.

The Joint Committee on the Library approved a plan which involves moving 24 statues from various locations in the Capitol to the Visitor Center. The plan's goal is to make the sculptures more accessible to the visiting public and help alleviate overcrowding.

The National Statuary Hall Collection was established on July 2, 1864, with the passage of legislation introduced by Representative Justin S. Morrill of Vermont. Under the legislation, all states were invited "to provide and furnish statues, in marble or bronze, not exceeding two in number for each State, of deceased persons who have been citizens thereof, and illustrious for their historic renown or for distinguished civic or military services such as each State may deem to be worthy of this national commemoration."

All state statues, in accordance with this law, were placed in National Statuary Hall. Overcrowding became an issue in the Hall quite quickly, and its aesthetic appearance began to suffer. In 1933, the situation reached critical mass. At that time the Hall held 65 statues, which stood, in some cases, three deep. More important, the structure of the chamber would not support the weight of any more statues. Therefore, on February 24, 1933, Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution No. 47 to provide for the relocation of statues and to govern the reception and placement of future additions.

Under authority of this resolution it was decided that one statue from each state should be placed in Statuary Hall. The others would be given prominent locations in designated areas and corridors of the Capitol. A second rearrangement of the statues was made in 1976 by authorization of the Joint Committee on the Library.

With the addition of the Capitol Visitor Center, it was decided that the statues would be rearranged once again in order to further highlight and feature this unique collection, which represents the 50 United States and its citizens. The statues selected to be moved are those that were most recently donated to the collection, and represent the diversity of our country.

Twenty-four statues will be displayed in the Capitol Visitor Center:

Sarah Winnemucca (Nevada)
Sakakawea (North Dakota)
Washakie (Wyoming)
John L. (Jack) Swigert (Colorado)
Philo T. Farnsworth (Utah)
Jeanette Rankin (Montana)
Mother Joseph (Washington)
Ernest Gruening (Alaska)
Kamehameha I (Hawaii)
Eusebio F. Kino (Arizona)
Edward Kirby Smith (Florida)
Po'pay (New Mexico)
Joseph Ward (South Dakota)
Maria L. Sanford (Minnesota)
Edward Douglass White (Louisiana)
Dr. John McLoughlin (Oregon)
William Edgar Borah (Idaho)
Julius Morton (Nebraska)
John M. Clayton (Delaware)
James Z. George (Mississippi)
Wade Hampton (South Carolina)
Ephraim McDowell (Kentucky)
James P. Clarke (Arkansas)
* Helen Keller (Alabama), *which is planned to replace the statue of Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry, will be placed in the Visitor Center after its unveiling at a future date.*

Eighteen additional statues will be rearranged throughout the Capitol Building to create balance and provide for improved visitor flow.

For more information about the National Statuary Hall Collection, please visit our Web site: http://www.aoc.gov/cc/art/nsh/nsh_coll_origin.cfm. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 228-1793.

Sincerely,

Stephen T. Ayers, AIA
Acting Architect of the Capitol

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