

**Statement of The Honorable J. Brett Blanton
Architect of the Capitol**



Architect of the Capitol Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations

**Statement before the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch,
Committee on Appropriations, United States House of Representatives**

March 11, 2020

Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to present the Architect of the Capitol's (AOC) Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 budget request of \$798 million.

Last month, I was honored to join this notable institution as the 12th Architect of the Capitol. In the first few weeks of leading this organization, I met with my executives and staff to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the agency. I am quite impressed with those that I have met thus far. I believe the AOC has all the necessary elements to succeed in its mission of serving Congress and the Supreme Court, preserving America's Capitol and inspiring memorable experiences. I honestly feel the best is yet to come for the Architect of the Capitol.

The agency I inherited has much to be proud of. Massive, once-in-a-generation renovations of exterior facades, interior spaces and system infrastructure are occurring across campus. Industry-leading changes to energy production and efficiency are being realized through the Capitol Power Plant's cogeneration system and several Energy Saving Performance Contracts. These transformation energy projects will maximize the use of appropriated funds and have the potential of reducing the Capitol Campus' energy consumption by upwards of 50 percent by 2025. The Architect of the Capitol provides exceptional support for large-scale public events, exhibits and educational programs. This support solidifies our agency's ability to deliver on behalf of the Congress and the Supreme Court.



VIEW OF THE WEST FRONT OF THE U.S. CAPITOL

For a small agency with modest resources, the level of effort required to simultaneously develop and execute short-term and long-range capital funding priorities and projects while minimizing disruption to the building occupants and record numbers of annual visitors is nothing short of amazing.

I am excited to bring my executive expertise to the AOC. The agency is mission driven and committed to service. Harnessing the dedication of my personnel to improve processes, operations, accountability and transparency is one of my top priorities.

Redirecting that enthusiasm and effort will be a difficult transition for the agency and our clients. Much of our work is ongoing. Even more emphasis is needed to better address deferred maintenance and emergent needs required for our facilities. As you know well, our needs far outweigh available resources within the Legislative Branch. As a result, our FY 2021 request continues the principals of the FY 2020 budget but seeks targeted increases in several key areas.

Operationally, we must continue to prioritize our critical centralized services and personnel that directly support our front line operations. Therefore, in FY 2021, we prioritized 16 percent of the agency’s requested resources to support the core central services that influence the execution of the entire program. Within this we are targeting areas that have a direct impact on the agency’s ability to execute our capital budget and deliver projects on time and on budget. Adequate support for studies, planning, project design and development, construction oversight and project management is lacking. We need to increase our ability to award contracts and procure supplies in a timely manner. And we must fast-track our modernization of information technology business processes.

FY 2021 LICP Request	
Studies and Designs	\$35.5 m
Ongoing Projects	\$98.9 m
Operation and Maintenance Upgrades	\$30.2 m
New Starts	\$18.6 m
Total Request	\$183.2 m

The AOC’s risk-based project prioritization process identified \$183.2 million for capital projects across campus in FY 2021. Of those, only \$18.6 million are new infrastructure projects. The agency will continue to pursue critical campus-wide stone and metal rehabilitation, landscape restorations and upgrades to security, utility, fire and life safety system needs and conduct studies that help us anticipate future project needs.

In this request, the biggest project remains the renewal of the Cannon House Office Building. This project is the largest managed by the Architect of the Capitol since the construction of the U.S. Capitol Building. Demolition and restoration within an occupied building is challenging. Restoration of a building which was completed in 1908 is even more challenging. Clearly this project has tested the agency. The AOC has used each of the completed phases of the project to identify opportunities to contain schedule and cost pressures. We believe that our approach, specifically implementing a formal change management process and more aggressive schedule management, will positively impact remaining project phases. In addition, I intend to continue to inform House leadership regarding how future phases are aligned with the move cycles and potentially combining work spanning future phases.

I also appreciate the feedback we have received from members and staff who work in the Cannon House Office Building. The AOC’s service center in the House Office Buildings is managing work orders received to address temperature adjustments, light fixture modifications and pest control. Continual improvement is necessary and expected. We appreciate your cooperation.

As I settle into this new role, I am committed to continuing a top-to-bottom assessment of the agency to address both real and perceived issues. I appreciate that my predecessor and both of the Acting Architects that followed him identified and sought ways to address human capital, information



AOC EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY CELEBRATES THE HARD WORK OF OUR
2,300 DEDICATED EMPLOYEES

technology infrastructure and continue to strengthen our cyber security initiatives. We will further leverage every dollar entrusted to us through a comprehensive enterprise asset management program that will enable us to optimize projects that produce the highest rate of return for facility longevity.

More than ever, the AOC needs a strong, transformational leader who will build upon our successes and usher in a new era of accountability to effectively maintain and preserve the universally recognized symbol of Western Representative Democracy. I am humbled to be that leader.

I appreciate your support of the AOC and I look forward to working with you this year as you consider our FY 2021 budget request.

technology and budgetary challenges. I, too, have thoughts about how to modernize the agency, better use federal resources and support our clients. You have my commitment that I will act quickly to implement solutions and keep this committee informed about our progress.

Specifically, we will develop a robust human capital strategy to address the changing workforce and the challenges of competing for talent in a region undergoing a healthy construction boom. The plan will ensure succession planning and train or retain our top talent. We will modernize the agency's information