

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

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**Architect of the Capitol Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations**

**Statement before the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch,  
Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate**

April 13, 2020

Chairwoman Hyde Smith, Ranking Member Murphy 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.

Earlier this year, 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. A couple of weeks later, the agency began responding to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

Today, the AOC team continues to work tirelessly to care for the Capitol Complex. As we all witnessed, the United States Senate worked night and day to pass the largest relief package in American history. Throughout that time, employees of the AOC kept the Senate Office Buildings clean, sanitized, and well maintained to enable congressional staff to safely do their jobs.



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

The outbreak and the threat of infection by COVID-19 has rightly caused Americans to be concerned and anxious. I am proud of the AOC employees who played an important role in helping Congress respond to the country's urgent needs. Making me even more proud, is that the AOC team continues to support campus needs by serving as the legislative branch purchasing agent for emergency supplies, managing the sanitization of spaces identified by our partners and ensuring the facilities and utilities are well maintained for future congressional needs.

Under these conditions, I have also been able to assess the future needs of the agency as a whole. 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. With your support, I honestly feel the best is yet to come for the Architect of the Capitol.

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.

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 principles 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               |           | 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. |
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| 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 |  |

In this request, one of the biggest projects is the next phase of the fire alarm system replacement in the Hart Senate Office Building. This important project will complete the replacement of all of the existing equipment and infrastructure with a modern, code-compliant fire alarm system. We also have budgeted significant resources to support the Library of Congress' aging infrastructure, as well as their continued expansion needs. The request for construction of Book Storage Module 7 at the Library's Ft. Meade campus represents approximately 23% of our total capital budget submission.

As I settle into this new role, I am committed to continuing a top-to-bottom evaluation 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 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.



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

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 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.