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## **ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL REVISES FLAG CERTIFICATE POLICY**

**WASHINGTON** – Acting Architect of the Capitol Stephen T. Ayers, AIA, announced that, effective today, he is issuing a new memo to affected Congressional offices changing the policy regarding messages included on the certificates that accompany flags that are flown over the U.S. Capitol.

“The Office of the Architect of the Capitol is a service organization. Flying the flags over the Capitol is an important constituent service for Members of Congress. When one of our services or policies doesn’t effectively serve Members of Congress or the American public, it needs to be changed immediately,” said Ayers.

The policy disallowing political and religious statements on flag certificates has been in place for several years, significantly predating Mr. Ayers’ assuming the role of Acting Architect in February 2007. Specifically, the guidelines that govern the flag flying operation were developed and issued in 2003. However, the practice of not allowing religious and/or political expressions on the flag certificates dates back to the 1970s, although not in writing.

Recently, some Members of Congress from the House of Representatives brought the issue of the policy to Mr. Ayers’ attention, noting that they believed these rules were inappropriate and inconsistently applied. “My review revealed that, in fact, these rules have been inconsistently applied and that it is inappropriate and beyond the scope of this Agency’s responsibilities to censor messages from Members. The Architect’s role is to certify that flags are appropriately flown over the U.S. Capitol, and any messages on the flag certificates are personal and between a Member of Congress and his or her constituents.”

“These Members believed the rules needed to be changed, and I completely agree,” said Ayers. “Therefore, after seeking guidance from our Congressional oversight committees, I have directed that the policy be changed and that new guidelines be reissued immediately.”

“I appreciate the Congress bringing this important issue to my attention, and I appreciate their support as we worked to resolve this situation to everyone’s satisfaction,” said Ayers.