Statement of the Honorable Stephen T. Ayers, FAIA, LEED AP
Architect of the Capitol

Architect of the Capitol Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations

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

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Chairman Lankford, Ranking Member Murphy, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to present the Architect of the Capitol's (AOC) Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget. Our request of $773 million prioritizes the people and projects required to fulfill our mission to serve Congress and the Supreme Court, preserve America's Capitol and inspire memorable experiences.

ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL STEPHEN T. AYERS ANNOUNCING THE COMPLETION OF THE U.S. CAPITOL DOME RESTORATION PROJECT

The AOC has a legacy that is rooted in the very beginnings of Washington, D.C., with the laying of the U.S. Capitol cornerstone in 1793. As the country grew, so did the Capitol campus and with it the AOC's responsibilities. Today, we operate and care for more than 17.4 million square feet across 36 facilities and 570 acres of grounds.

In the last two decades, our footprint has increased substantially. Along with the sheer growth in size, the complexity of operating our facilities has changed significantly. The number of people that work here has grown, and the number of people that visit has skyrocketed. The Capitol campus is home to thousands of daily occupants and has hosted approximately 4.5 million visitors from throughout the U.S. and around the world in FY 2016.

During this time, the AOC has not only kept up with, but staked a leadership role in using innovative technology and addressing significant security challenges all while driving down injury rates, driving up energy efficiency and reducing costs.

GRANT MEMORIAL RESTORATION BEFORE AND AFTER

In 2016, we completed several high-profile projects on-time, within-budget and with minimal disruption to building occupants and visitors.

In the fall, we celebrated the once-in-a-generation restoration of the U.S. Capitol Dome and Rotunda. With the support of the Congress, hundreds of expert craftsmen worked day and night to restore the Dome to its original inspiring splendor.

We also completed the initial phase of the work needed to preserve Union Square. In 2011, Congress transferred Union Square to the AOC and made the meticulous restoration of the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial a priority. Weather and time have not been kind to the memorial, and we are working to address safety issues and repair the most visibly deteriorated conditions throughout Union Square. The restoration of the bronze components and marble pedestals of the Grant Memorial will once again allow all who visit to experience the power and majesty of the memorial.

In addition, we successfully completed the first phase of the Cannon Renewal project. On time and under budget, this phase included installing building utilities, primarily in the basement, and the moat area of the courtyard. This enables future work to connect to the new systems, minimizing shutdowns and disturbances.

STONE PRESERVATION AT THE U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING

Stone preservation across the Capitol campus remains a top priority for us, as nearly every building is enveloped in stone and all have significant problems. To address these stone issues across the campus takes a team of historic preservationists, structural engineers and stonemasons, among others. The men and women of the AOC are in a race against time as the infrastructure rapidly crumbles and deferred maintenance projects accumulate. While we face many challenges, we continue to successfully tackle this important issue. In 2016, we completed the first section of the U.S. Capitol Stone and Metal Preservation project. This multi-phased project is designed to extend the life expectancy of the deteriorated stone and to replace missing elements of the U.S. Capitol Building.

And as we have for more than 150 years, the AOC recently supported preparations for the 58th Presidential Inauguration. We successfully constructed the inaugural platform, set up the necessary fencing, placed over 30,000 chairs on the grounds, procured the sound system and other support systems, installed the flags and buntings, and coordinated many other activities with the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies. We are extremely proud to have once again been part of this historic event.

2017 PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

Immeasurable Responsibility

As substantial and historic as some of our recent accomplishments are, they should not diminish the importance of our day-to-day duties. AOC employees work around the clock to maintain our facilities and ensure the health and safety of those who visit and work at the Capitol campus each day. Our FY 2018 budget request of $773 million includes funding increases to provide the regular, ongoing maintenance that is vital to protect our recent major investments. Regular preventive maintenance is the best defense against the enemy of deterioration by slowing the cycle of decline and helping guard against catastrophic failure and unsafe conditions. The most prudent, cost-effective investment we can make is to support adequate personnel and resources to perform regular inspections and routine maintenance that improve functionality and extend the life span of our infrastructure.

The demand of meeting mandatory cost increases is compromising our ability to fully execute these core functions. Budget constraints have slowed our ability to perform maintenance and, rather than purchasing needed parts and service throughout the year, we are relying on temporary fixes that buy time but are not enough to prevent conditions from worsening. Across campus, we must address a growing backlog of work that is needed to keep our heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment and electrical systems operational. Plumbing inspections, carpentry work, general repairs and emergency repairs compete for limited resources. In recent years, we have successfully managed to balance competing needs and diminishing resources, but we are now faced with critical life cycle repairs and replacement requirements that must be met to reduce the risk of system failures.

PERFORMING ROUTINE MAINTENANCE IMPROVES THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

To address this, our request will provide resources necessary for preventative maintenance, thereby avoiding more costlier fixes to campus infrastructure and slowing the growth of the $1.55 billion backlog in campus fire, life-safety and security improvement needs.

In addition, using the AOC's risked-based project prioritization process, we are recommending 21 Line Item Construction Program projects totaling $240 million. Of this, $166.4 million (or 69 percent) is specifically for projects classified as Deferred Maintenance (repair or replacement is past due, in some cases significantly) or Capital Renewal (approaching the end of useful life).

DETERIORATION OF THE RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING EXTERIOR ENVELOPE

Our FY 18 request includes funding for the Russell Exterior Envelope Repair and Renovation project. The Russell Senate Office Building recently passed its 100th anniversary and is showing its age. This project mitigates life-safety hazards and reduces current maintenance and energy costs.

Preservation of the exterior stone, windows and doors at the U.S. Capitol and the U.S. Supreme Court are also underway. These projects will prolong the life expectancy and preserve the historic features of the buildings by preventing water and air infiltration, slowing deterioration of the stone and corrosion of the metals, repairing damage, and removing soil and stains.

And soon we will begin the Senate Underground Garage. Ensuring this critical project is fully funded will allow us to remain on-schedule and prevent continued deterioration that has jeopardized the garage structure and increased the risk of deteriorating concrete.

Also, construction of Module 6 at the Library of Congress' book storage facility complex at Fort Meade, Maryland, will further accommodate the Library's expanding collections of books, manuscripts, prints, maps, cultural and other copyrighted materials. Without additional off-site storage,

as the Library's collections in all formats grow, the current situation continues to deteriorate, exacerbating the already dangerous conditions with regard to life-safety, research and preservation.

STORAGE MODULE AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS FT. MEADE CAMPUS

We are also requesting funds in FY 2018 for several safety and security projects that impact campus-wide services. At the Capitol Power Plant, the four existing cooling towers on the roof of the West Refrigeration Plant are more than 35 years old and beyond their useful life expectancy. The concrete associated with the cooling tower and other system components are continuously deteriorating, increasing potential for the towers to fail without warning.

Externally, and in close coordination with the Capitol Police Board, we are prioritizing security upgrades to the Capitol campus. We must replace vehicle barriers and kiosks that have reached the end of their intended life cycle. Additionally, an enhanced exterior security presence and upgraded building infrastructure are essential elements in support of the security mission of the U.S. Capitol Police.

Improvements are needed to address the long-term maintenance, preservation and restoration of Capitol Square, which encompasses the 56 acres of grounds surrounding the U.S. Capitol. The aging, antiquated and disorganized system of infrastructure above and below ground continues to increase the negative impacts on projects, further damages the Capitol Square grounds, and prevents effective planning for future initiatives.

The AOC is dedicated to creating a safe, welcoming and inspiring experience for all who visit Capitol Hill. For many visitors, this may be their first and only time seeing the nation's capital, and we work hard to ensure the experience is worthy of this working symbol of American democracy and freedom. The dedicated employees of the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center and the U.S. Botanic Garden work to enhance customer service, hospitality and visitor engagement in a seamless, cohesive and positive visitor experience. As a source for civic education, we must continue to grow our exhibit and education experiences to maintain the high level of quality visitors expect and to expand our reach to include online and virtual visitors to the U.S. Capitol.

PRESERVATION DAY CELEBRATION AT THE U.S. CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER

Conclusion

The AOC's core values – integrity, professionalism, teamwork, safety and pride – drive our daily mission to serve Congress, the Supreme Court and the American people every day. From clearing snow after the January 2016 snow emergency, to coordinating Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's lying-in-repose ceremony, to planning congressional office moves and supporting the 58th Presidential Inauguration, we strive to be a world-class organization providing superior service to our clients. The AOC's FY 2018 budget request furthers our commitment to ensuring the Capitol campus is accessible to all and remains a vibrant display of our democracy.