

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



Architect of the Capitol Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations

**Statement before the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch,
Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives**

Thursday, February 26, 2015

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Chairman Graves, Representative Wasserman Schultz and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Architect of the Capitol's (AOC) Fiscal Year 2016 budget request.

With the support of Congress, the AOC is a strong steward of the buildings and grounds that comprise Capitol Hill. The incredibly talented and skillful employees of the agency care for facilities that are decades and even centuries old — buildings that were constructed without the modern equipment and efficiencies we now take for granted.

In support of the U.S House of Representatives, AOC employees continue to deliver day-to-day excellence. This year they conducted 190 member office moves in just 21 days. In a continuing commitment to improve efficiencies, and reduce costs, the AOC House Superintendent's Office implemented electronic time keeping for all employees. This effort included training staff in the use of computers and the ability to submit leave requests online — saving time and improving accountability.



Safety canopy over the Rotunda in support of the Capitol Dome Restoration.

Recognizing that AOC employees are our most important assets, we continue to make investments to empower them. In 2014, we held more than 30 town halls, sharing critical information and soliciting feedback from our staff. In addition, we conducted an organizational assessment survey and are pleased that more than 80 percent of AOC employees participated. Based on this feedback, AOC was ranked eighth out of 25 mid-sized federal agencies by the Partnership for Public Service's Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings.

AOC is also working to strengthen our supervisors. We have launched a "Supervisory Academy," a week of intense supervision, management and leadership theory and skills development to help our supervisors become extraordinary leaders. Beyond our supervisors, we have launched two programs to encourage our staff to further improve their abilities. This includes the Architect's Mobility Program that allows employees who lack qualifying experience to move into positions where they can gain a specialized skill set, enabling them to progress according to their abilities. And our Exchange of Critical Expertise and Learning (ExCEL) program serves to improve organizational productivity, enhance strategic efficiencies and increase employee knowledge.

As strong as our employees are, our buildings are in need of additional help. Materials like stone, cast iron and bronze are key elements that provide the character and charm that thousands of

members of Congress, their staff and visitors have enjoyed throughout our nation's history. Yet even these robust materials degrade over time. The maintenance needs of the Capitol campus continue to grow every year, allowing small problems to become major life-safety and infrastructure problems requiring significant investments and resources to remedy.

Taking into account the emerging priorities and looming urgent repairs for Fiscal Year 2016, **we are requesting \$661.8 million — a decrease of 2.2 percent from our Fiscal Year 2015 budget request.**

To address capital projects categorized as urgent or immediate, we are requesting \$144.5 million. This is a \$12 million or 7.7 percent decrease from our Fiscal Year 2015 request, leaving \$182.9 million of deferred maintenance work to be requested in future fiscal years. We recognize that not every project can be funded at the same time, and the deferred work will continue to be added to future funding requests. While we work to mitigate the risk of major failure by carefully monitoring and maintaining the facilities and systems, we know that delaying critical projects will inevitably result in increased fiscal demands on future budgets.

Ongoing budget constraints mean we must carefully weigh competing demands by utilizing our expertise to recommend investments in the most critical projects. Our Project Prioritization Process ranks every project based on its importance and urgency so that we can effectively recommend to Congress the investments that are most needed to ensure the Capitol campus remains safe, functional and protected for all who work and visit the buildings and grounds.

Aging Buildings Require Critical Investment

Viewed from a distance, the buildings of Capitol Hill are inspiring and impressive, but up close, the buildings are more distressing than impressive, as weather, age and deferred maintenance are destroying many of the finer details of these awe-inspiring stone edifices.

When stone is properly maintained, it is one of the world's most enduring materials; but when exterior stone deteriorates, major problems such as water infiltration, rusting of steel structures, mold and energy loss can occur within the building.



Deteriorating stone on the Cannon House Office Building exterior.

While our dedicated employees perform the work necessary to maintain our buildings and grounds, they can only ensure the integrity of the materials when they are given adequate resources and

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support. Years of austere budgets have already resulted in the loss of many irreplaceable heritage assets.

Stone preservation continues to emerge as one of our most important priorities. The condition of the exterior stone on most, if not all, of the buildings on Capitol Hill is rapidly deteriorating. The



AOC stonemason makes repairs to the
Olmsted Terrace Walls.

AOC's historic preservationists, structural engineers and stonemasons are in a race against time as the infrastructure rapidly deteriorates and deferred maintenance projects accumulate.

Stonemasons from our Construction Division have been hard at work making repairs to the Olmsted Terrace — the first in more than a century. Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in 1874, considered the founder of American landscape architecture, the terrace walls provide a strong visible base to the Capitol and a heightened sense of grandeur and scale. Unfortunately, the terrace conditions have deteriorated over time. But through the expertise of our Historic Preservation Officer and our stonemasons — funded from Capitol Construction and Operations — we are able to make the critical repairs needed to save these assets and restore the Olmsted Terrace to its former splendor.

The longer these stone buildings are left to the destructive effects of time and the elements, the more the problems compound. Instances of cracking and spalling stone grow more serious and more costly to repair every year, and the temporary fixes the AOC undertakes to prevent catastrophic failures are not enough to prevent conditions from worsening. Investing in stonework projects will pay long-term dividends and preserve these historic buildings for decades to come.

At the U.S. Capitol Building, an investment in the rehabilitation of the exterior stone will prolong the building's life expectancy and preserve its historic features. The **U.S. Capitol South Extension Exterior Stone and Metal Preservation** work will include mortar replacement, fabrication and installation of Dutchman repairs, and stone cleaning. This work will help stem the water infiltration that has been destroying the existing historic fabric of the building.



Spalling stone on the U.S. Capitol Building.

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AOC is also recommending a \$70 million investment into the **House Historic Buildings Revitalization Trust Fund**.

Established by Public Law 111-68, the fund allows the AOC to invest in the revitalization of the major historical buildings and assets of the U.S. House of Representatives. This investment is critical for our work on the 10-year renewal of the Cannon House Office Building (CHOB). In 2015, the Cannon Renewal Project began Phase 0. This phase includes installing building utilities, primarily in the basement and the moat area of the courtyard, and enables future work to connect to the new systems, minimizing shutdowns and disturbances.



Spalling stone on the Cannon House Office Building.

Phases 1-4 each impact a quarter of the building, one side at a time, starting with the west wing in 2017 (New Jersey Avenue) followed by the north wing, east wing and concluding with the south wing. Members in the CHOB will not be relocated until December 2016 in advance of the Phase 1 construction. Construction activities are expected to take place during normal business hours, with the noisiest work activities occurring after business hours.

The Summerhouse, a favorite Capitol Grounds respite during the hot summer months, is rapidly deteriorating and requires intervention to restore the structure to its former grand condition. In particular, the terra cotta roof and bricks are crumbling, leading to an increase in life-safety issues, and the center fountain and grotto lack a recirculating water system, which is an inefficient use of resources. If the **Summerhouse Restoration** project is completed, it will ensure that this Capitol Grounds treasure is preserved for generations.



Olmsted's Summerhouse is an American historic treasure.

In future fiscal years, stone preservation will continue to be the AOC's main focus, as nearly every building on Capitol Hill is built from stone and nearly all are in need of repair. Scaffolding already surrounds parts of the U.S. Capitol Building and will soon be visible around the Cannon House Office Building and Russell Senate Office Building as well. These critical stone restoration efforts will ensure that the work of Congress can continue for decades to come.

Critical Projects

In our Fiscal Year 2016 budget request, we are requesting funding for projects that will ensure necessary investments are made in our historic infrastructure and increase the safety and security of those who work or visit Capitol Hill. Providing superior service to our customers and executing numerous large-scale and highly visible multi-year construction projects is a formidable challenge that we are addressing by managing risk and transparently communicating with Congress and the American public.

AOC is responsible for meeting a wide range of fire, life safety, accessibility and performance standards, while also balancing operational needs and challenging working conditions that are unique to Capitol Hill and our aging buildings. In particular, we are focused on energy efficiency, addressing safety deficiencies and repairing crucial building infrastructure.

The Capitol Power Plant (CPP) will continue to play an essential role in the AOC's long-term energy conservation and cost reduction efforts. The CPP's existing chillers, located in the West Refrigeration Plant (WRP), were installed in the 1970s and are rapidly approaching the end of their useful life expectancy. The risk of chiller failure increases as we continue to rely on this equipment to provide environmental control to the buildings on Capitol Hill. The next phase of the **WRP Chiller System Replacement** will replace two old, inefficient chillers and primary chilled water pumps with a new chiller, in addition to making other essential upgrades and repairs. The chiller replacement will reduce the Capitol Power Plant's energy consumption, increasing efficiency and simultaneously providing a significant electrical cost savings.



Chiller reaching the end of its life expectancy.

To mitigate Office of Compliance citations across the Capitol campus, we are requesting funding for the second phase of the **Library of Congress Thomas Jefferson Building North Exit Stair B**, which will address important egress deficiencies in the building. The AOC will construct a new self-supporting masonry exit stair in the northeast stacks that extends from the cellar to the top floor of the building, in addition to constructing new fire-rated exit passageways. The project will ensure that occupants of the Jefferson Building will be able to efficiently and rapidly exit the building during an emergency evacuation.

Damage to our crucial building infrastructure, such as garages, is especially concerning. The Rayburn House Office Building Garage, constructed in 1965, is in need of a comprehensive project to ameliorate severe corrosion of the structural framing system. The **Rayburn Garage Rehabilitation**



Deteriorated concrete slab in
Rayburn Building Garage.

work will address part of the \$222 million of deferred maintenance and capital renewal backlog in the Rayburn Building. The reinforcing steel at the top and bottom of the concrete decks continue to corrode at a rapid rate and pose a safety hazard to the congressional community. Our request would fully fund the first of four phases and will include architectural modifications for life safety, accessibility, lighting, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, fire protection and physical security. Failure to stop the continued deterioration of the garage would seriously jeopardize the garage structure. Concrete slab failures create life-safety concerns and increase rehabilitation costs.

The longer these projects are delayed, the more the conditions of the buildings will decline. Proper investment is needed to ensure the historic fabric of these buildings is not lost to the ravages of time.

Conclusion

Chairman Graves, Representative Wasserman Schultz and members of the subcommittee, funding our recommended capital projects in Fiscal Year 2016 ensures that necessary investments are made in our aged infrastructure, and maintains the unique and historic buildings that serve Congress and the American people.

We appreciate the previous investments, support and trust Congress has placed in us to address critical construction projects across the Capitol campus. The investments made in the AOC have enabled us to preserve history and ensure Congress can accomplish its daily functions.

The buildings of the Capitol campus are well cared for by the dedicated men and women of the AOC who use their incredible talents and skills to maintain the buildings and grounds. Day after day, our employees deliver inspiring and professional service to our customers. Each employee's contribution is vital to our success as an organization.

There is much work to be done, but we believe that there is no greater mission than upholding the historic buildings entrusted to our care. The American people and future generations are counting on us to work together to invest the necessary resources to sustain the treasures of Capitol Hill.

