

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



Architect of the Capitol Fiscal Year 2019 Appropriations

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

May 8, 2018

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Murphy, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to present the Architect of the Capitol's (AOC) Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 budget. Our request of \$720 million is a modest representation of the resources needed to support our infrastructure and adequately fulfill our mission to serve Congress and the Supreme Court, preserve America's Capitol and inspire memorable experiences.

This year, the AOC celebrates the 225th anniversary of President George Washington accepting Dr. William Thornton's design for the U.S. Capitol. Honored as the first Architect of the Capitol, Dr. Thornton could hardly have imagined how much the U.S. Capitol and our campus would change and expand from his design, adopted on April 2, 1793. Today, we operate and care for more than 18.4 million square feet across 37 facilities and 570 acres of grounds.

Every day the AOC works to preserve our historic and aging infrastructure, while upgrading facilities to meet the needs of a 21st century workforce and address rapidly evolving security requirements. In FY 2018, Congress provided a significant budgetary increase that will help reduce operational constraints that impede the ability of our more than 2,100 skilled employees.

The talented men and women of the AOC strategically plan, allocate and manage our resources across the agency to support high-profile events, construct and develop critical infrastructure projects, and meet the daily needs of building occupants and visitors. Last year, we successfully supported preparations for the 58th Presidential Inauguration, completed the conservation of the U.S. Capitol's Brumidi Corridors, and introduced a new automated system for congressional staff to quickly and easily obtain passes for their tour groups.



CAPITOL EXTERIOR STONE & METAL PRESERVATION PROJECT



VIEW OF THE U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING FROM THE U.S. BOTANIC GARDEN'S BARTHOLDI PARK

We reached milestones on several major projects across campus including stone preservation projects at the U.S. Capitol, U.S. Supreme Court, Russell Senate Office Building and U.S. Botanic Garden Conservatory. Also, the necessary major equipment needed for the cogeneration system has been installed.

Unfortunately, these successes do not seem as grand when measured against our limited ability to keep pace with mounting needs. Additional increases are needed in FY 2019 to address critical operational and capital deficiencies that could negatively impact our performance. AOC employees are in a race against time as the infrastructure rapidly deteriorates and projects continue to accumulate.



PERFORMING ROUTINE MAINTENANCE IMPROVES THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

AOC professionals are our greatest asset. We strive to provide streamlined, efficient operations and maintenance activities. Fully funding payroll obligations and bolstering support for maintenance activities reduces the risk of infrastructure failures that will require larger and more costly repairs.

Each year, inflationary personnel and preservation costs continue to rise. The ability to sustain adequate personnel to keep up with increased security requirements is essential to support U.S. Capitol Police facilities and congressional resiliency requirements.

Additionally, with annual visitation growing by approximately 12.5 percent last year, increases are needed for the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, the U.S. Botanic Garden and the Library of Congress to continue to inspire current and future visitors by providing first-rate customer service, hospitality and visitor engagement. The ability to improve their facilities and grow the exhibit and education capabilities requires additional resources to maintain the high level of quality visitors expect, desire and deserve when visiting their nation's capital.

Any further reductions in common central services, funded through the Capital Construction and Operations appropriation, threatens agency efficiencies and increases jurisdictional operating costs. These services include supporting the AOC's specialized construction, curatorial, design, energy and sustainability, facilities planning, high voltage, historic preservation, project management, safety, fire and environmental, cybersecurity, and technical support functions.



VISITORS AT THE U.S. BOTANIC GARDEN PARTICIPATE IN A HANDS-ON GARDEN EXHIBIT

The increased funding in FY 2018 will allow us to slow the need to move funds targeted for supplies, routine maintenance, upgrades, inspections and emergency repairs to cover annual inflationary increases while mitigating negative impacts to our mission requirements. We will continue to work to reverse this trend and prevent a reactionary posture that largely addresses issues as failures occur. We must not fall back into a position that increases the risk of system failures that will require larger and more costly repairs.

Our FY 2019 request includes a \$21 million increase to specifically address costs for supplies, routine maintenance, upgrades, inspections and emergency repairs that continue to escalate.

To an untrained eye, our buildings look to be in great condition, but across campus we continue to face a growing list of work-arounds that are needed to circumvent problems and simply maintain current operations. With additional funding we can begin to change this dynamic and ensure we maintain all systems responsibly, thereby reducing the need for more numerous and expensive Line Item Construction Program (LICP) projects on an annual basis.



CAPITOL POWER PLANT REFRIGERATION PLANT REVITALIZATION PROJECT

Delays in annual preventive and corrective maintenance initiatives and the continued phasing of major replacement and renovation projects wreak havoc on infrastructure systems. To address this, the agency's risk-based prioritization process identified \$173 million in LICP projects primed for FY 2019 funding. Of this, approximately \$22.7 million (13 percent) will be used to complete the next phases of critical infrastructure projects needed at the Capitol Power Plant.



INCREASED EXIT OPTIONS IN THE THOMAS JEFFERSON BUILDING ARE NEEDED TO IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF OCCUPANTS AND VISITORS

Projects that were requested in FY 2018 but did not secure funding represent an additional \$49 million (28 percent), including the North Exit Stair Improvement project at the Library of Congress' Thomas Jefferson Building. This project would address an Office of Compliance citation to increase exiting egress capacity and improve fire protection systems. Funding this project would reduce delays and overcrowding conditions during emergency evacuations.

In the Senate, the Hart Senate Office Building's air handling units require replacement to ensure reliable service and system control. The Hart Building is almost 40 years old, and many of the internal systems are nearing the end of their useful lives. If these needs are not addressed in a timely manner, failures will become more likely and routine repairs will become more extensive and costly.

Also in the Senate, during deliberation over the FY 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act the final phase of the Russell Senate Office Building's exterior stone restoration project was removed from FY 2018 consideration and will need to be added to our FY 2019 request.

We continue to prioritize security upgrades across the Capitol campus and the ongoing effort to replace vehicle barriers and kiosks that have reached the end of their intended life cycle. Additionally, we are seeking funding for the first phase of the replacement of all chillers and associated distribution piping within the Alternate Computer Facility, an important component in ensuring efficient, reliable congressional operations.

Adequately funding the AOC's needs as they are identified will ensure the stakeholders and visitors to Capitol Hill experience the grandeur of these historic treasures while meeting the needs of a modern workforce.



AERIAL VIEW OF THE U.S. CAPITOL CAMPUS