

**STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE STEPHEN T. AYERS, FAIA, LEED AP
ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL**

**Regarding Fiscal Year 2013 Appropriations
For the Architect of the Capitol**

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

February 9, 2012

Mr. Chairman, Representative Honda, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Architect of the Capitol's (AOC's) Fiscal Year 2013 budget request.

The Architect of the Capitol's core mission is to serve Congress and the American people as well as preserve and maintain the historic facilities entrusted to our care. We know first-hand the challenges associated with preserving these historic buildings, and we have much experience in anticipating and planning for future requirements to ensure that future generations will continue to be inspired by their United States Capitol and all of the history that it holds.

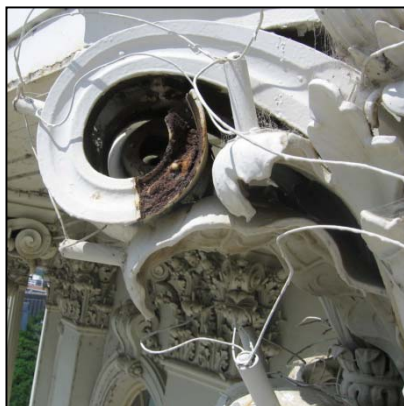
In the past year, we also experienced unexpected events, such as the 5.8 magnitude earthquake that shook the area. Our dedicated, professional staff was among the first on the scene to assess the situation and assure that the facilities were safe and operational so Congress can continue to conduct

the people's business. In the House Office Buildings alone, in the days following the earthquake, our House Superintendent's staff completed over 400 work orders that included making repairs to plaster ceilings and walls that suffered cosmetic damage as shown in the adjacent photos.



However, despite our best efforts to anticipate and make needed repairs, as these facilities continue to age, they become more difficult to maintain, building systems such as the plumbing and heating are beginning to fail in the oldest office buildings, and installing the most up-to-date technology has proven challenging. Making the necessary improvements and upgrades to Congressional facilities will require significant investment. We appreciate the Congress's support of our efforts over the past several years to improve the buildings and infrastructure on Capitol Hill, however, the number of pressing needs continues to grow as the availability of Federal dollars becomes more constrained.

Therefore, in developing our Fiscal Year 2013 budget request, we worked to prioritize our efforts to ensure that every resource goes toward the most needed and most important work, realizing that we must balance our stewardship responsibilities with fiscal responsibility. For Fiscal Year 2013, our responsibilities will also include two very staff- and resource-intensive activities – preparing for the Presidential Inaugural ceremony, and orchestrating the post-election office moves in the House and Senate.



As stewards of our national treasures, it is my duty to put forth a reasonable budget that I believe will best meet the need of our aging infrastructure. This awesome responsibility has led me to request an increase in my budget during fiscally challenging times; and not doing so, I believe, would be irresponsible.

However, I found that the key to balancing all of these responsibilities is to put forth our request in a prioritized way that provides Congress with the information they need to make sound and knowledgeable decisions to align our budget with available fiscal resources. We believe we have done that with this budget request.

Realizing Significant Efficiencies and Savings

It is my additional responsibility to find ways of working faster, smarter, and cheaper. We believe we are leading by example by becoming more efficient in an effort to save taxpayer money. These efforts are both large and small and most of these efforts resulted in significant cost avoidances, that is, by doing things more efficiently, we were able to reduce the costs of carrying out daily operations, programs, or projects.

We are using the innovative ideas, such as engaging cross-functional teams, to implement best practices to help us become more efficient in our operations, drive quality improvements, and further enhance efficiencies and reduce costs. The following are examples of the efficiencies the AOC realized during Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012.

- We implemented an agency-wide effort to reduce overtime while maintaining service levels and response times. We were able to accomplish this by adjusting existing employee work schedules and hiring new employees to work alternate schedules (vs. the traditional Monday-Friday work week). We were therefore able to provide suitable weekend coverage; reducing our overtime costs in Fiscal Year 2011 by 22 percent. This was especially noteworthy given the extraordinary manpower requirements of the post-election Congressional office moves.
- We implemented targeted hiring freezes, delayed filling vacant positions, eliminated positions, and reduced the number of temporary employees and annuitants among our ranks, thereby allowing us to reinvest our resources in Deferred Maintenance and Capital Renewal projects.
- We reviewed all of our subscriptions to print and online publications and cut those that were unneeded or underutilized. This effort yielded nearly \$50,000 in annual cost savings.
- In the Rayburn House Office Building, several escalators needed new steps in order for them to continue to operate safely and effectively. However, replacing the existing steps, which were installed during the construction of the building, was cost prohibitive. Instead, AOC staff did extensive research into acquiring refurbished escalator steps. This option not only saved more than \$500,000, it was a more sustainable option by reducing the amount of materials introduced into the waste stream.
- In some of our jurisdictions, we evaluated several leases and either relocated leased operations to more cost effective/smaller locations, or re-competed the lease to reduce costs. This resulted in immediate and long-term cost avoidances totaling more than \$1 million.
- In July and August 2011, on excessively hot days when there was a high demand on the power grid, the AOC implemented its load curtailment procedures. These days are called “Gold Days.” Observing them helps reduce demand on the electric grid during high demand periods and helps reduce utility costs to the AOC. Members’ offices played a role in observing Gold Days by turning off non-essential lighting and office equipment. In addition, the AOC dimmed hallway lights and shut down decorative water fountains.
- We have found significant savings by taking a critical look at our information technology services. By using virtual server technology, we reduced the number of physical servers from 200 to 10. This reduced energy consumption, space requirements, and maintenance costs. We also standardized and consolidated our platform software, which reduced maintenance and support costs. In all, we saw more than \$220,000 in annual savings and improved our IT equipment reliability.

Accomplishing these efforts through more effective means also provided an extra benefit to Congress and to the American people; the AOC was able to reinvest resources in important Deferred Maintenance and Capital Renewal projects. To give one example, we reinvested funds saved through our energy reduction efforts into the initial planning and design for the Cogeneration and West Refrigeration Plant projects in Fiscal Year 2011. Therefore, the AOC was able to reduce its budget request for capital projects in Fiscal Year 2013 to \$161 million, a 10 percent decrease from its Fiscal Year 2012 capital projects request. Nearly \$50 million of this funding will go toward addressing Deferred Maintenance projects. And, the 16 capital projects on our Fiscal Year 2013 Recommended Line Item Construction list specifically will address the most critical life-safety, infrastructure preservation, and security needs. In the most difficult of economic times, we must continue to correct deficiencies and prevent facility or system failures. The key is to prioritize these projects to ensure every taxpayer dollar goes toward the most important work.

Project Planning and Prioritization

Over the past several years, we have refined our dynamic project prioritization process, which has contributed to our ability to identify and communicate to Congress the urgent need to invest in the historic and iconic buildings and infrastructure, and the resulting risks if these needs are not addressed.

The AOC's Project Planning and Prioritization Process ranks every necessary project using the conditions of the facilities and the anticipated urgency with which we need to provide the levels of investment and maintenance required to ensure they remain safe, functional, and secure. The first priority, of course, is to ensure the health and safety of all those who work in and visit the Capitol campus. This "triage" process for facilities identifies the most serious issues first, which we assess carefully to develop solutions to fix the problems while also addressing necessary life-safety issues, security requirements, energy-savings opportunities, and historic preservation measures. We take the same approach in meeting our clients' needs, however by placing a priority on fixing existing deficiencies and deferred maintenance; new construction projects are often postponed.

We have several tools that we use to assess which facilities need emergency care versus those that can be nursed along until funding becomes available to address specific Deferred Maintenance or Capital Renewal projects in those particular buildings. These tools include Facility Condition Assessments, the Capitol Complex Master Plan, Jurisdiction Plans, and the Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan,

which examines phasing opportunities, project sequencing, and other factors to better facilitate the timing of the execution of major Deferred Maintenance and Capital Renewal projects.

Our comprehensive prioritization process rates projects on a number of objective factors to produce an overall hierarchy of importance. During this process, projects are classified by type and urgency. The projects are then scored against six criteria: safety and regulatory compliance; security; historic preservation; mission; economics, and energy efficiency and environmental quality. We then compile these scores to produce a composite rating consisting of classification, urgency, and project importance and we also apply a criticality and risk decision model to the overall prioritization list to filter which ones are included in our annual budget request.

To provide us with a long-term, strategic look ahead to queue up priorities, investments, and projects, we use the Capitol Complex Master Plan. This past year we have worked to finalize an updated Master Plan that looks ahead 20 years and assesses the present physical condition and capacities of the buildings within the Capitol campus within the nine associated Jurisdiction Plans. These plans help us make future decisions about facility renewal requirements and new projects. For example, there may be instances where major, whole building renovations should be undertaken rather than a myriad of smaller projects, such as the planned Cannon House Office Building Renewal project. Renewals are more cost effective for implementing a variety of necessary improvements as they avoid having to re-enter a space several times to perform different types of work.

Finally, our Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan helps us meet several goals by analyzing all of the facility requirements, grouping them into logical and economical sequencing and phasing, prioritizing the resulting requirements using a set of objective criteria, and establishing measureable outcomes. Through this prioritization process, we work to document current and future needs and identify ways to seamlessly integrate those needs with modern-day code, security, technology, and sustainability opportunities. The Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan also provides outcomes showing the results if work is performed as planned and the resulting outcomes and risks if work is not performed.

Over the past several years, Congress has been very supportive of the AOC's efforts to address critical Deferred Maintenance projects. However, it is important to acknowledge that there is a growing threat that must be faced – a very large number of Deferred Maintenance and Capital Renewal projects that

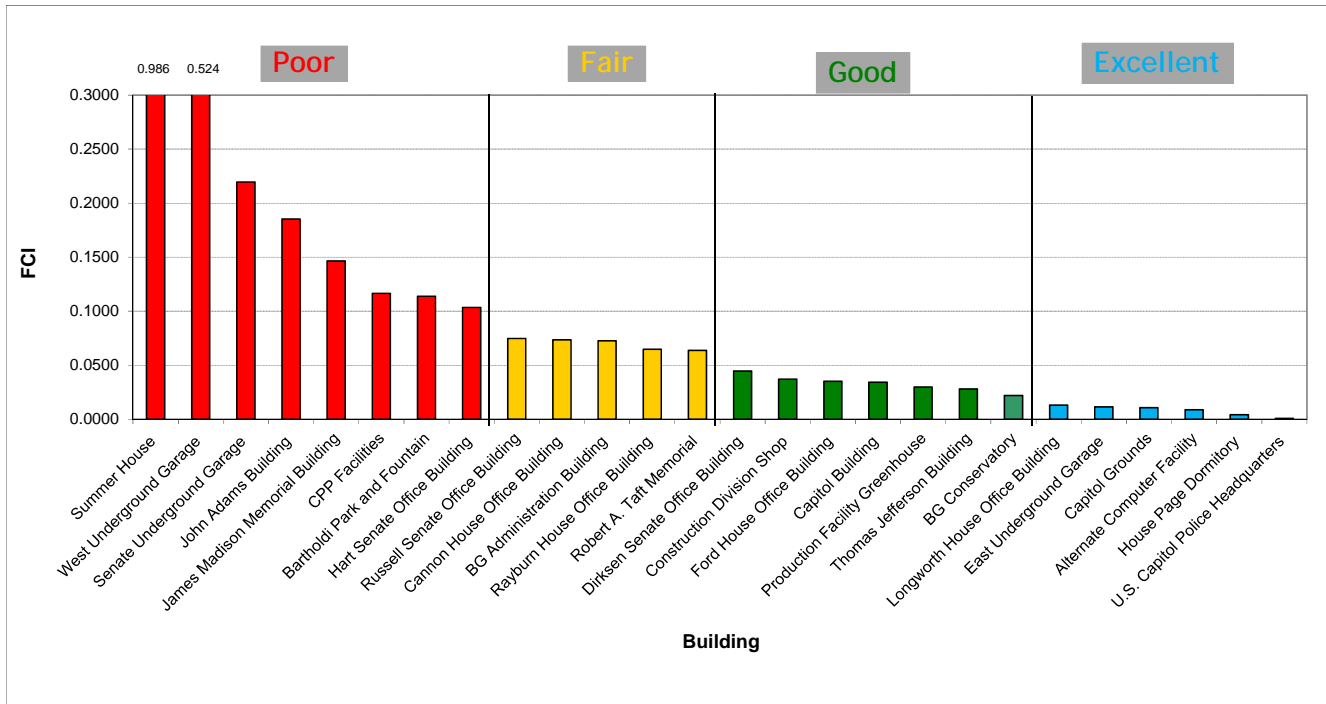
remain to be addressed. For Fiscal Year 2013, we are recommending that an additional \$202.6 million in necessary work be further deferred to a later fiscal year due to the austere budget environment. This is a calculated risk. The AOC continues to carefully monitor and maintain the facilities and systems to minimize the risk of catastrophic failure. We also continue to monitor the large number of Capital Renewal projects that remain unaddressed.

As demonstrated in the accompanying Facility Condition Index (FCI) charts (*page 7*) comparing Fiscal Year 2010 and Fiscal Year 2011, Congress has provided significant funding over the past several fiscal years, which has been directed to help repair the infrastructure of several facilities, which in turn has improved their overall conditions.

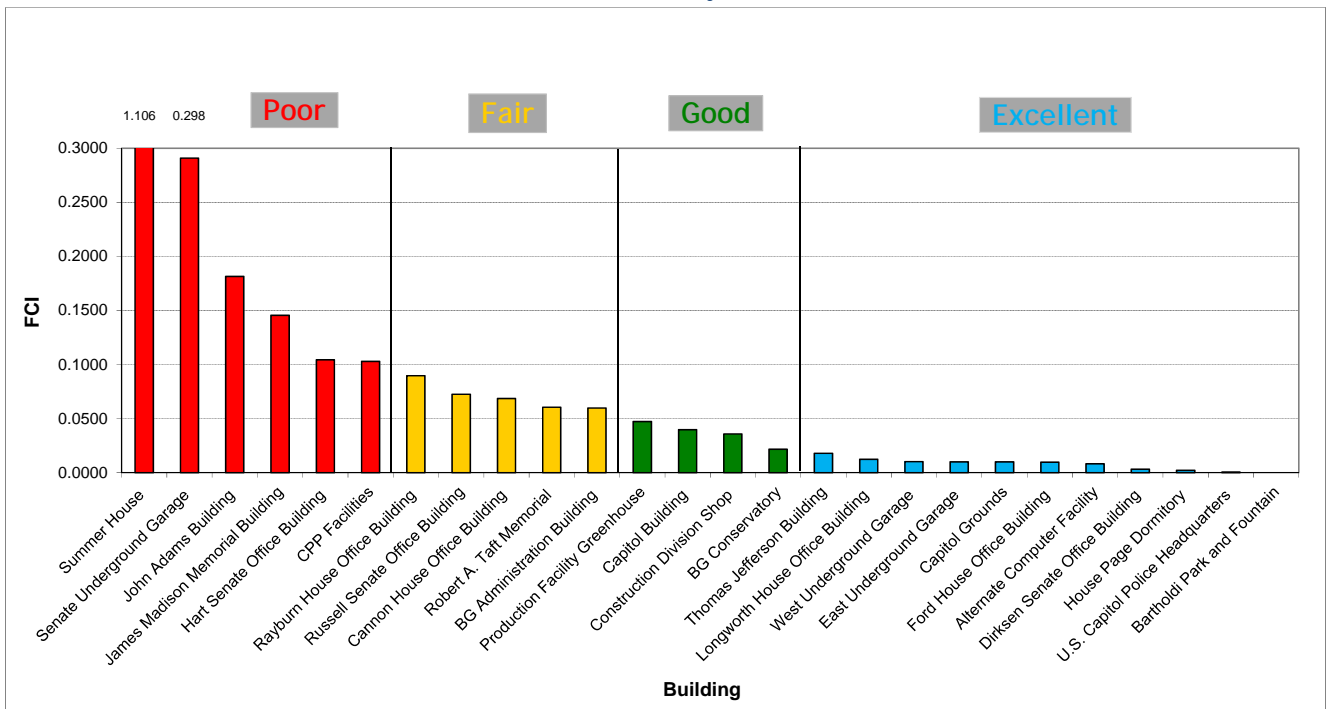
However, while several facilities have trended beyond a “good” condition, we have found over the past year that several of the facilities that are now rated as “fair” or “poor” are getting far worse due to continued deterioration. This trend is more evident in the projected FCI information provided in the accompanying Capitol campus illustrations (*page 8*), which demonstrate how the conditions of each of the Congressional facilities will continue to worsen over the next five years as compared to today. (The Fiscal Year 2016 illustration shows the facility condition changes with no additional investments made after Fiscal Year 2012.)

The longer Capital Renewal projects are delayed, the conditions in these facilities will continue to deteriorate; deficiencies will grow more and more serious, and ultimately more costly to repair. Additional consequences of not addressing looming Capital Renewal projects are the continued crumbling of facilities’ infrastructure; a loss of historic artwork and architectural features; continued system and building failures, and security threats.

Fiscal Year 2010 Facility Condition Index



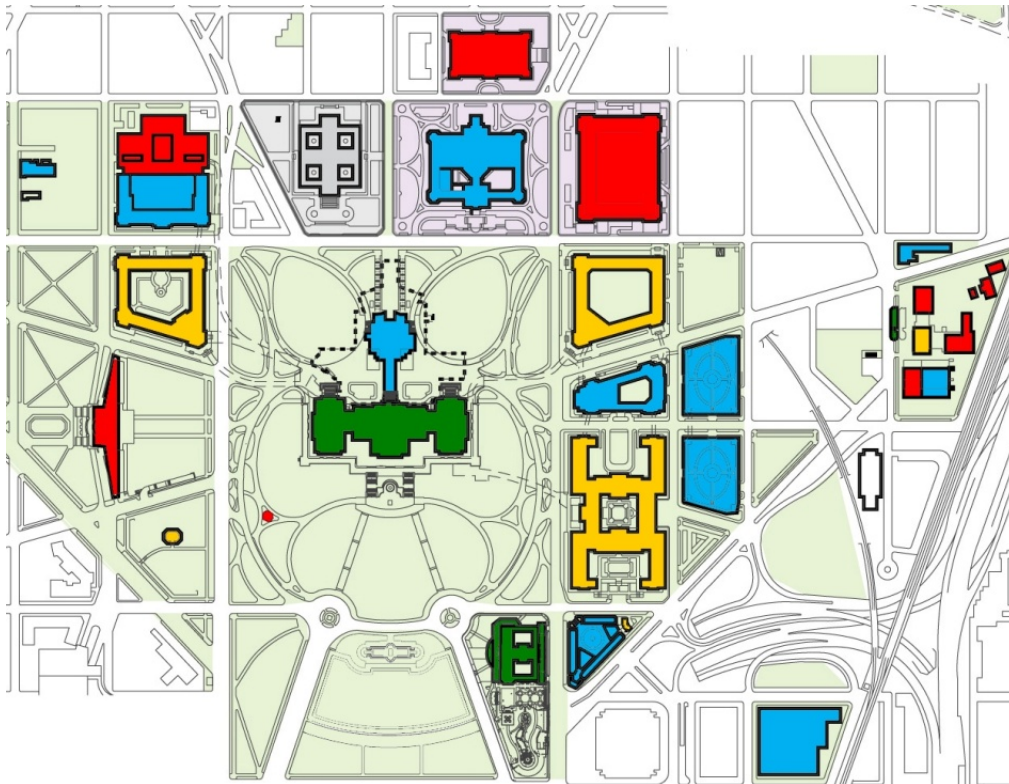
Fiscal Year 2011 Facility Condition Index



Note: Incorporates projects funded in Fiscal Year 2012

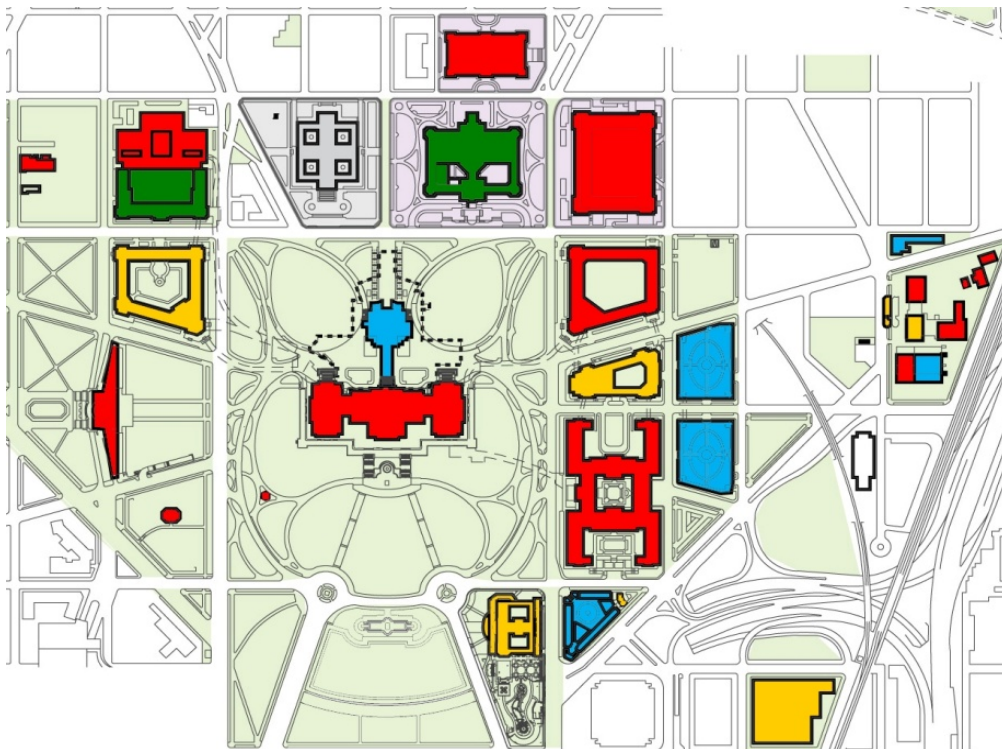
FCI Legend	
Over 0.10	= Poor
0.05 – 0.10	= Fair
0.02 – 0.05	= Good
Less than 0.02	= Excellent

Fiscal Year 2011 Facility Condition Index (FCI) by Facility *(Incorporates projects funded in Fiscal Year 2012)*



Projected

Fiscal Year 2016 Facility Condition Index (FCI) by Facility





Leak Damages Member Offices in Cannon Building

Jan. 9, 2012, 5:59 p.m.

In another sign that the Cannon House Office Building needs a major renovation, a leak has caused damage in six Members' offices.

According to Architect of the Capitol spokeswoman, the leak began late Saturday night in a Member's fourth-floor office suite, "caused by a failed pipe plug in a water line due to age."

The leak came two months after a 64-square-foot section of plaster, which also deteriorated from age, fell from Cannon's fourth-floor ceiling.



Cannon ceiling tiles fall, strike police officer

By Jordy Yager

Posted: 06/25/09 11:58 AM [ET]

A U.S. Capitol Police officer was taken to the hospital on Thursday after ceiling tiles fell in the Cannon House Office Building and struck his arm, highlighting the building's need for renovations.

"He was transported to George Washington Hospital with [a] minor injury to [his] arm ... for further evaluation," said Capitol Police spokeswoman Sgt. Kim Schneider, in an e-mail.

A "few" ceiling tiles came down in Room 345.

At more than 100 years old, the Cannon building has fallen into a state of disrepair.



Large Chunk of Plaster Falls From Cannon Ceiling

Nov. 21, 2011, 1:19 p.m.

The Architect of the Capitol is already laying out plans for major renovations to the Cannon House Office Building scheduled to begin in 2017. And if an incident this morning is any indication, the need is pressing for such restorations to the oldest office building on the Capitol campus.

An approximately 64-square-foot section of plaster fell from the fourth floor ceiling in Cannon, an AOC spokeswoman said, adding that no injuries or further damage occurred.

"Following an inspection by the AOC's House Superintendent's office, it appears the plaster deteriorated due to age," she explained.

The AOC has known for some time that major work is needed to keep the 100-year-old building in working order.



Cannon House Office Building Renewal Project

The most recent and poignant example of the consequences of allowing Capital Renewal projects to worsen into Deferred Maintenance is the Cannon House Office Building. The Cannon Building was completed in 1908, making it the oldest Congressional office building, and it is definitely showing its age.

Essential systems housed behind the walls and in mechanical rooms are continuing to crumble and fail. As members of the Subcommittee have read in the various Capitol Hill newspapers, water pipes are cracking and serious water leaks are causing significant damages to office suites. Plaster is weakening and falling from the ceilings.

Based on the facility condition assessments we have conducted in recent years, we have found major deficiencies in the heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems, plumbing, mechanical equipment, life-safety and fire protection systems, electrical equipment, and exterior stone.

Several building components such as windows, doors, lighting, and insulation need to be upgraded to comply with Federal energy standards. Also, various aspects of the building need to be upgraded to comply with current accessibility requirements. Lastly, there are several historic preservation requirements throughout the interior and exterior of the building.



The Cannon Building is Crumbling

By Jordy Yager

Posted: 05/05/09 07:01 PM [ET]

At over 100 years old, the Cannon House Office Building has fallen into a state of disrepair, with crumbling limestone falling from the roof, an energy-inefficient air conditioning system that is more than 70 years old and water pipes that leak into member offices.

And those are just some of the woes that have long plagued the oldest House office building, which is home to more than 400 lawmakers.

Capitol administrators will make a strong push Wednesday to launch a series of overdue renovations as safety and environmental concerns mount.

One of Cannon's most dangerous needs hovers above the heads of hundreds of tourists, staffers and members as they negotiate the sidewalk below. Four-foot slabs of limestone jut out of the roof's molding as aesthetic additions to set off the lip of the roof.

To address these urgent problems and to ensure the Cannon Building provides an effective workplace into the next century, with Congress's support, we have begun planning for the complete renewal of the building. Our Cannon Project Team has been identifying the program of requirements, that is, identifying all of the areas requiring improvement and

upgrading. They also are developing integrated project construction and funding schedules to ensure the proper sequencing of work is aligned with the necessary resources.

I also have personally reached out to Members of Congress to share information about how important the Cannon Renewal Project is. I have testified before the Committee on House Administration and this Subcommittee on the dire need to address the Cannon Building's crumbling infrastructure over the past three years. This past fall, I attended a Member briefing to discuss the project and answer Members' questions, as well as sent out a letter to all House Member offices explaining the need for this project. In addition, in December 2011, we hosted an "Industry Day" to reach out to the construction industry to inform them about the project requirements. Providing project information in advance of the procurement process will help ensure that we receive the best value for the Congress as this major building renovation moves forward.

When the project is complete, the quality and reliability of key building systems such as heating, cooling, lighting, plumbing, fire and life-safety, and accessibility will be greatly improved and will be much more efficient. Equally important, the functionality of the building for both Members and staff will be greatly enhanced.

Other buildings on the Capitol campus are as old – or in the case of the U.S. Capitol Building – older than the Cannon Building. As stewards of the Capitol campus, the AOC is committed to continuing to work with Congress to ensure that the proper investments are made in the facilities at the appropriate times.

Funding the following capital projects in Fiscal Year 2013 ensures that necessary investments are made in our historic infrastructure, and increases the safety and security of those who work in or visit

the facilities on the Capitol campus. In addition, investing in the projects will continue to preserve national treasures for future generations, and many are designed to allow the Congress to realize greater energy efficiencies and savings.



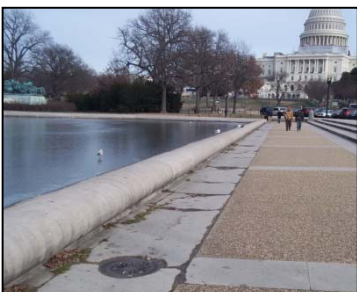
- **Dome Restoration, Phase IIA** – In Fiscal Year 2011, we began Phase I of this project with the restoration of the Dome skirt. The ongoing work includes repairing and restoring historic ironwork, sandstone, and brick masonry. In addition, old paint is being removed from the interior and exterior of the Dome skirt and it will be repainted. This phase of the project is on budget and on schedule for completion in fall 2012.

Phase IIA is the second of four phases and will involve making needed repairs to the Dome’s exterior. This also will include exterior ironwork repairs, restoration of columns, finials and decorative ornaments, repair of the gutter system and repair/replacement of windows, installation of a new fall protection system, repair/replacement of roof electrical systems, installation of a bird deterrent system, and priming, resurfacing, and repainting of the Dome’s exterior.

Our Dome project is one of many that are transpiring across the country. Many state capitols are experiencing many of the same issues and are undergoing costly repairs as well. For example, Oklahoma’s 94-year-old dome is undergoing a \$130 million renovation. In Minnesota, they are looking at a \$241 million restoration of its 106-year-old capitol, \$4 million of which is just to repair leaks in the dome.

The planned Phase IIA repairs will ensure that the elements that make the Capitol Dome unique and iconic will not be lost to time and elements. It also will provide the appropriate life-safety systems are in place for the protection of AOC employees charged with the continuous care and maintenance of the Dome.

- **Union Square Stabilization** - In December 2011, the Architect of the Capitol’s jurisdiction was expanded to include Union Square – an 11-acre parcel including the Capitol reflecting pool and the Grant Memorial. Our Fiscal Year 2013 budget request reflects this added responsibility and includes \$7.3 million for its required care and maintenance, including reflecting pool cleaning and repairs, stabilization of the steps, immediate sidewalk repairs, lamp post replacement, and cleaning and restoration of the statuary. As this is a new requirement for Fiscal Year 2013, estimates may be revised and updated as additional condition assessment information becomes available.



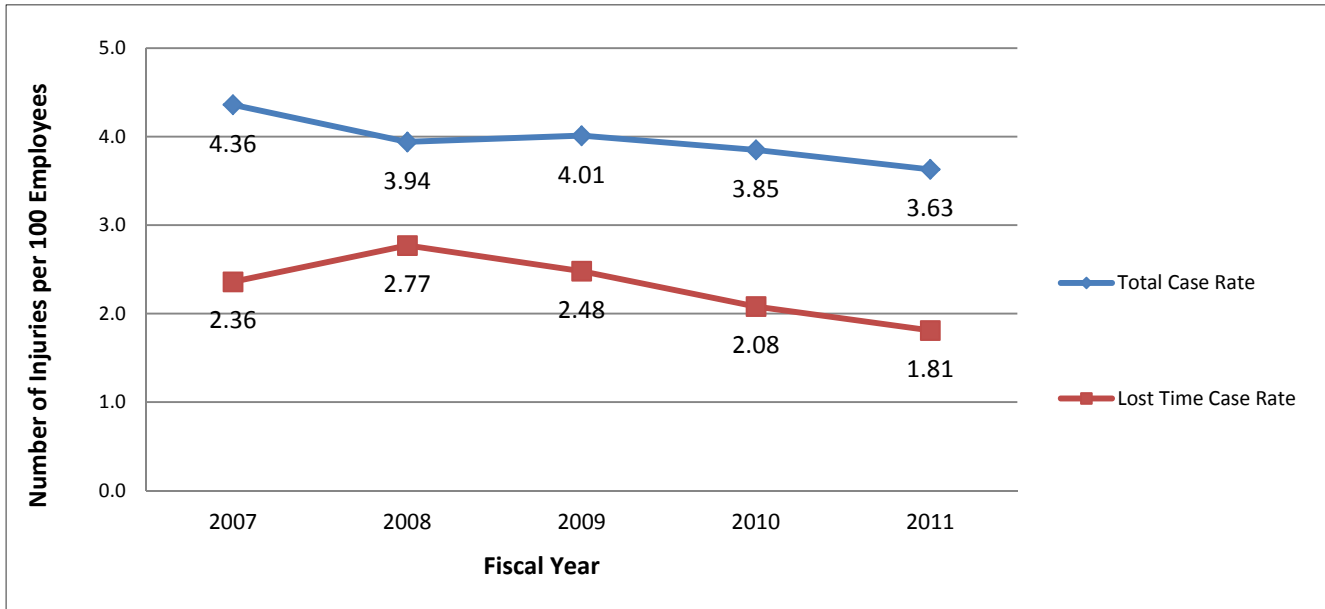
- **West Refrigeration Plant, Chiller Addition** – The hot and humid Washington summers have increased the cooling demands across the Capitol campus and the four existing chillers in the Capitol Power Plant’s West Refrigeration Plant are more than 30 years old and well beyond their useful lives and are no longer reliable to meet current demand. This project would fund the installation of two variable speed, high-efficiency centrifugal chillers and ancillary equipment in the West Refrigeration Plant Expansion. This would ensure that a steady supply of chilled water would be maintained to ensure that Congressional facilities would be cooled during the hottest months of the year. In addition, installing new, energy efficient equipment will reduce campus-wide energy consumption, which will aid in meeting Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 requirements.
- **Electrical Distribution Upgrade, Alternative Computer Facility** – Security experts are warning against a new type of terrorist attack – the “blended attack.” Blended attacks are defined as coordinated attacks combining a physical attack against a target along with a cyber-attack against the same or different targets. Natural disasters, such as last August’s earthquake, also can wreak havoc with computer systems and equipment. Therefore, providing for the appropriate redundancies for computer systems that support Congressional functions is essential. This project would ensure that aging electrical system at the Alternative Computer Facility is upgraded to provide added reliability and redundancy, reducing the possibility of catastrophic failure of critical systems.

Ensuring a Safe Workplace

Safety is a top priority at the AOC. Since Fiscal Year 2007, Congress has invested over \$210 million in more than 55 safety-related projects executed by the AOC. This includes a number of facility-related projects, including enclosing exit stairways in the Longworth House Office Building; installing ventilation systems and upgrading electrical and lighting in Congressional facilities; and extending sprinkler and smoke detector coverage in major office buildings.

The level of safety throughout the Capitol campus has never been higher and continues to improve. This is best demonstrated by the continued reduction in the agency's Injury and Illness (I&I) rate.

AOC Injury and Illness and Lost Time Rates



In Fiscal Year 2011, the AOC's total I&I rate fell to 3.6 percent, and its lost time rate was reduced to 1.81 percent. This is compared to Fiscal Year 2010's rates of 3.8 percent and 2.1 percent. Much of this success can be attributed to the AOC's long-established safety education and training programs that place a strong emphasis on employee safety. By way of example, I am very pleased to report that as of February 1, 2012, our Library Buildings and Grounds jurisdiction employees have worked 718 consecutive, injury-free days.

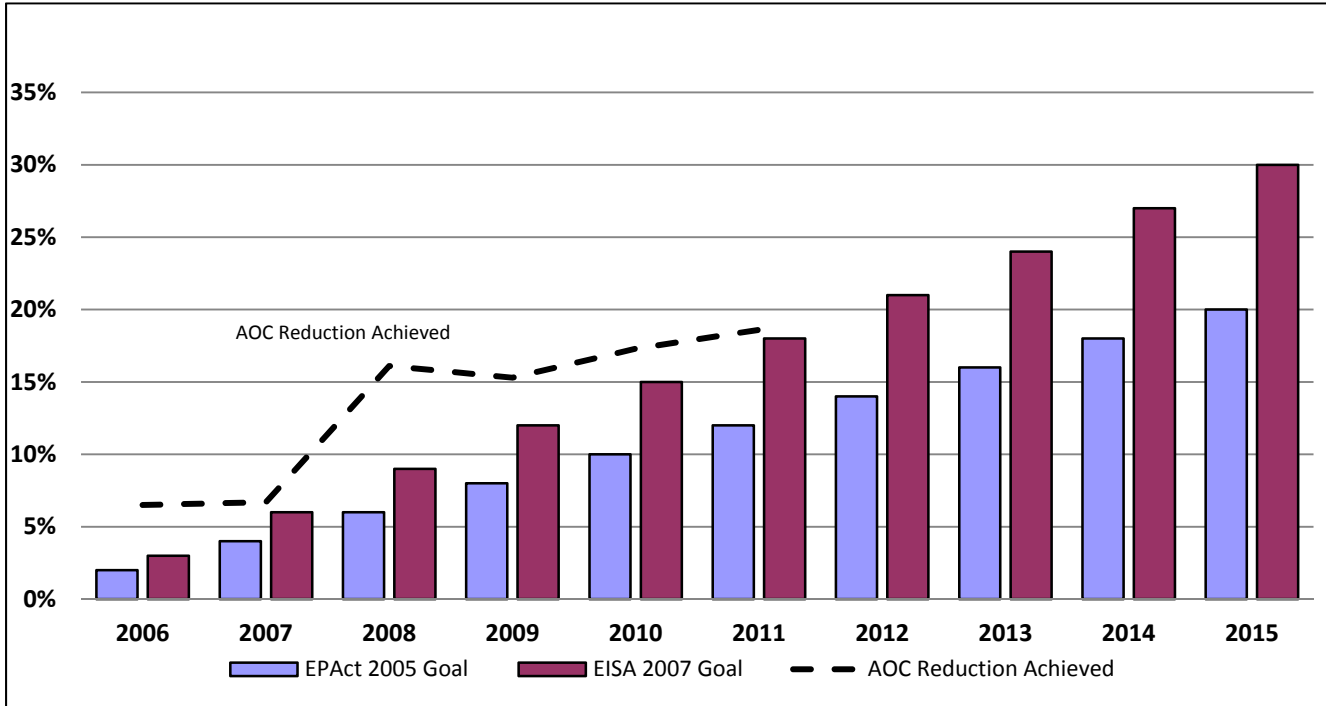
Saving Energy and Taxpayer Money through Sustainable Practices

The Architect of the Capitol's legacy of sustainability began with the setting of the Capitol's cornerstone in 1793, and is continuing today. The AOC is working to reduce energy and water consumption across the Capitol campus in order to help save taxpayer money.

In Fiscal Year 2011, the AOC exceeded the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA 2007) energy reduction goal of 18 percent by achieving a 19 percent reduction. Looking forward, the energy reduction goal for Fiscal Year 2012 is 21 percent, and meeting this and future reduction goals will become more challenging because the projects that yielded quick results have been completed.

Implementing the next series of projects will take more time and more resources to realize savings in taxpayer money, and further reductions in energy usage.

AOC Meeting Energy Reduction Goals



The AOC’s Sustainability, Energy and Water Conservation Division has been leading the Agency’s efforts to further reduce energy consumption on Capitol Hill. In Fiscal Year 2011, the AOC reduced energy consumption by 109,000 MMBtus, which resulted in \$2.5 million in cost avoidances over Fiscal Year 2010.

The projects and programs that contributed to these savings include the Energy Savings Performance Contracts (ESPCs) for the House and Senate Office Buildings and the Capitol Building as well as retro-commissioning of equipment to optimize building systems’ performance. The AOC also is utilizing energy audits, building energy modeling, and utility meters to assess energy consumption and identify additional opportunities for energy reductions.

In November, the AOC began using “waste-to-energy” as an alternative method to dispose of solid waste from Capitol Hill. Waste-to-energy refers to the burning of solid wastes to generate heat and, in turn, produce steam and electricity. This process creates usable energy employing waste that would

otherwise be placed in landfills – diverting up to 90 percent of the Capitol campus’s non-recyclable solid waste. The heat generated from this combustion process produces enough steam and electricity to power an office building the size of the Dirksen or Longworth Building for several months. In Fiscal Year 2011, more than 5,600 tons of non-recyclable waste was collected from Congressional facilities. Using waste-to-energy methods on Capitol Hill complements the AOC’s ongoing robust recycling programs. In fact, the AOC recycles approximately 4,000 tons of materials each year, including construction waste and e-waste such as computers and other electronic equipment.

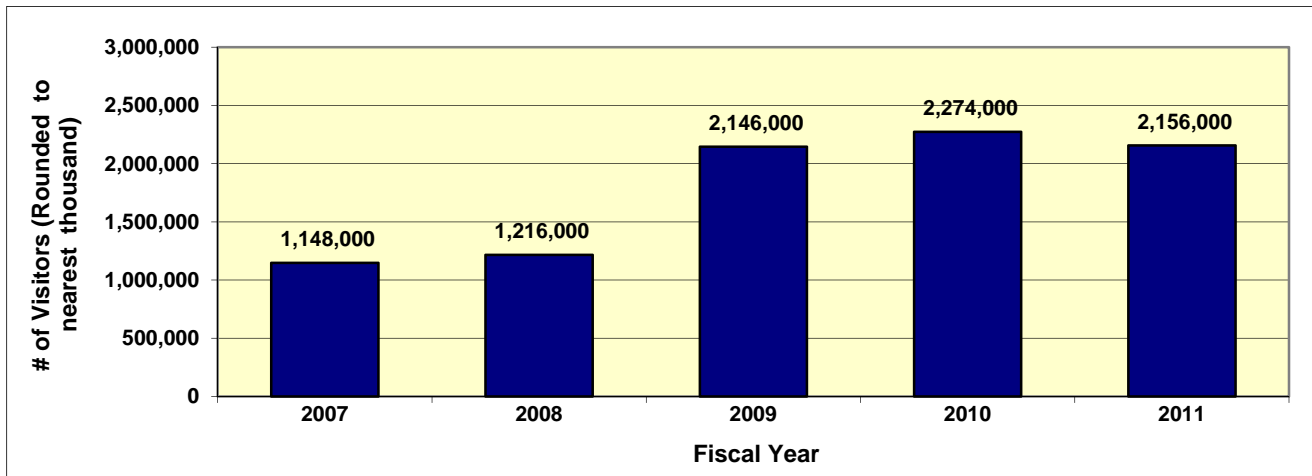
Looking ahead, the implementation of cogeneration at the Capitol Power Plant in the near future will play an essential role in the AOC’s long-term energy conservation strategy. Cogeneration uses combustion turbines to generate both steam and electricity. The electricity produced would help to offset the electricity used by the Capitol Power Plant. In addition, the use of the heat generated from this operation would produce enough steam to reduce reliance on existing, aging boilers. Utilizing cogeneration will help Congress meet the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 requirement of a 30 percent energy reduction by 2015, and will increase the Capitol Power Plant’s overall efficiency.

The AOC is proposing the use of a Utility Energy Services Contract (UESC) to help finance construction of the cogeneration plant. This public-private partnership leverages private funding allowing the AOC to execute construction in a timelier manner, and allows the use of limited appropriated funds for other priorities, such as deferred maintenance or life-safety and security projects.

Providing Extraordinary Services and Inspiring Experiences

Another large component of the AOC’s mission is visitor services. Since the Capitol Visitor Center opened in December 2008, nearly 7 million visitors have come through its doors. The visitor experience at the U.S. Capitol is comprised of highly personal moments that can inform, involve, and inspire those who come here, and this is largely provided by the expert Visitor Center staff who provide memorable and engaging tours. The Visitor Center also provides visitors with convenient amenities including information desks, restrooms, gift shops, and a restaurant. In fact, in Fiscal Year 2011, the Restaurant and Special Events Division, supported more than 850 Congressional events and served nearly 243,000 meals.

Visitors to the U.S. Capitol



** Capitol Visitor Center opened in Fiscal Year 2009*

With the Capitol Visitor Center situated on the East Front of the Capitol, visitors approaching from the West can stop and smell the roses in the National Garden. And, each year nearly one million people visit the U.S. Botanic Garden. The U.S. Botanic Garden staff provides enriching educational programs for guests of any age, and they are the recognized leaders in the development and promotion of sustainable landscapes.

In fall 2011, the White House Council on Environmental Quality released guidance for Federal agencies on Sustainable Practices for Built Landscapes, indicating that the built landscape is critical to the overall success of sustainability programs within the Federal government. A working group led by the U.S. Botanic Garden produced the 32-page guidance. This was the first time the Legislative Branch has been invited to participate in such an effort. The guidance provides information to assist agencies in meeting their targets under Executive Order 13514, and covers facilities with or without buildings in addition to historic or existing structures.

The new guidance is based on the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES), an interdisciplinary effort by the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at The University of Texas at Austin, and the United States Botanic Garden to create the nation's first voluntary guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land design, construction, and maintenance practices.

The guidelines will be used by Federal agencies when constructing new facilities, rehabilitating existing owned or leased facilities, or when landscaping improvements are otherwise planned. Federal landscaped property provides opportunities to promote the sustainable use of water and land, conserve soils and vegetation, support natural ecosystem functions, conserve materials, promote human health and well-being, and ensure accessibility for all users, including those with disabilities.

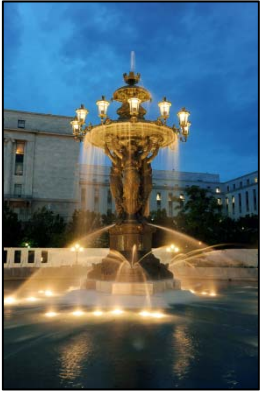


AOC Accomplishments

In addition to the accomplishments detailed above, we have recorded many other significant achievements in the past year. For example, we continued to improve our cost accounting procedures and internal controls, and received our seventh consecutive clean audit opinion from independent auditors on all of our financial statements. I am very pleased to report that in 2011, we officially closed all of the recommendations from GAO's General Management Review (67 out of 67). This is a notable achievement for us, and we have benefitted greatly from the improvements made to our programs and processes over the years.

In addition, our annual Building Services Customer Satisfaction Surveys continue to show that more than 90 percent of our customers are satisfied with the level of service the AOC is providing them. This is a testament to the commitment of our talented staff who are dedicated to putting customer service first.

Another area where we have made noteworthy progress is our Utility Tunnel Improvement Program. In 2007, the AOC entered into an agreement to address safety and health issues in the utility tunnels that provide steam and chilled water to most of the buildings on the Capitol campus. The work is progressing very well and we are on schedule and within budget to close all citations and meet the required completion date of June 2012.



In addition, we completed a number of projects this past year in our efforts to maintain and preserve the historic assets entrusted to our care, most notably, the renovation of the Bartholdi Fountain. This multi-year project involved restoring the sculpture at the center of the fountain as well as restoring and waterproofing the concrete pedestal. New energy-efficient plumbing and electrical distribution systems also were installed.

And, to assist us in setting goals, prioritizing initiatives, and streamlining processes, our team crafted a new five-year Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2012-2016. We are using the innovative ideas within the Strategic Plan, such as engaging cross-functional teams, to implement best practices to help us become even more efficient in our operations, drive quality improvements, and further enhance efficiencies and reduce costs.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, the AOC has made tremendous strides over the past few years to deliver projects on time and within budget, to enhance workforce flexibilities, to foster greater communication and transparency, and to build stronger relationships both with our clients and one another. We are looking to become world-class leaders in what we do, and in order to do that we must keep pace with the new strategies for facilities maintenance, energy conservation, security, and historic preservation. At the same time, we understand the challenges that an austere fiscal environment presents, and we have developed this budget in an effort to balance our stewardship responsibilities with fiscal responsibility.

To that end, we are effectively managing our resources – including personnel – to respond to these fiscally-challenging times. Through our thorough project planning and project management efforts, we are able to target resources and staff on the projects that are of the highest priority. Not only does this give us greater flexibility and better results, we have worked to reduce staffing throughout the agency. The AOC team is doing more with less – focusing on improving our operations, realizing more efficiencies and saving taxpayer money, which we can then reinvest in the areas and facilities in need of the most care.

Each day, we strive to embrace and embody the Core Values detailed in our Strategic Plan because the professionalism and integrity of each AOC employee demonstrates our dedication to providing quality services and our commitment to holding ourselves to the highest standards. We recognize that we do our best work through teamwork, each of us lending our individual strengths and talents to the greater goal of the entire team. We take great pride in what we do and in the honor of serving Congress and the American people.

This concludes my formal statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.