

THE U.S. CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER—TEN YEARS
OF SERVING CONGRESS AND THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE
ADMINISTRATION
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

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MAY 16, 2018
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Printed for the use of the Committee on House Administration



Available on the Internet:
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U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

32-666

WASHINGTON : 2018

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**THE U.S. CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER—TEN
YEARS OF SERVING CONGRESS AND THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 11:00 a.m., in Room 1310, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Gregg Harper [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Harper, Davis, Walker, Brady, and Raskin.

Staff Present: Sean Moran, Staff Director; Kim Betz, Deputy Staff Director/Policy and Oversight; Dan Jarrell, Legislative Clerk; Matt Field, Director of Oversight; Ed Puccerella, Professional Staff; Erin McCracken, Communications Director; Khalil Abboud, Minority Deputy Staff Director; Kristie Muchnok, Minority Professional Staff.

The CHAIRMAN. I now call to order the Committee on House Administration for purpose of today's hearing, examining the United States Capitol Visitor Center as it approaches its tenth anniversary.

The hearing record will remain open for 5 legislative days so Members may submit any materials they wish to be included. A quorum is present, so we may proceed.

First, I would like to thank our witness for taking time out of her schedule to be with us today.

On October the 20th, 2008, President Barack Obama signed legislation sponsored by my friend and colleague, then-House Administration Committee Chairman Robert Brady, designating the newly completed construction project at the United States Capitol as the United States Capitol Visitor Center.

On December 2, 2008, coinciding with the 145th anniversary of the Statue of Freedom's placement on top of the Capitol dome, the CVC officially opened its doors to the public. Over the last 9 years, the CVC has welcomed more than 20 million visitors to our Nation's Capital.

In addition, the CVC has supported well over 7,000 congressional events in CVC meeting spaces, assisted more than 31,000 of our interns and staff on delivering engaging Capitol tours, and assisted guests at Congressional Gold Medal ceremonies, commemoration ceremonies, annual Memorial Day and Capitol Fourth of July concerts, as well as three Presidential inaugurations.

Today we welcome the leader of these efforts, Ms. Beth Plemmons, Chief Executive Officer for Visitor Services at the CVC.

Under Ms. Plemmons' management, the vast majority of constituents visiting the CVC rate their experience as a positive one. According to CVC survey data, 93 percent of visitors to the Capitol said their expectations were met or were exceeded and they were likely to recommend the Capitol tour to their friends.

Last year, the CVC witnessed the highest annual number of visitors to its facility at more than 2.4 million Americans and international visitors who came to see our great symbol of democracy in action. In 2017, the CVC also had a record number of sales in their restaurant and gift shops, which proudly sell only made in America merchandise.

Today, we have the opportunity to hear from our witness about the lessons the CVC management has learned during the facility's first decade of operations, the greatest operational challenges it faces, and what the plan is to continue to meet the needs of Congress and the American people in the years to come.

Ms. Plemmons, thank you for your testifying before us today. We appreciate you being here.

And I would now like to recognize my colleague and the Ranking Member of this Committee, Mr. Brady, for the purpose of providing an opening statement.

Mr. Brady.

[The statement of The Chairman follows:]

Mr. BRADY. Thank you. And I want to thank Chairman Harper for arranging today's hearing.

And thank you, Ms. Plemmons, for testifying today on behalf of the Capitol Visitor Center.

Ten years ago, the CVC opened its doors as a brand new facility for visitors from across the world to experience the United States Capitol and its actively working government. Under the leadership of Ms. Plemmons, remarkable progress in organizational structure, education, and visitor experience have been made.

The evolution of the CVC has been a rewarding project, although inherited, for me to be a part of. Seeing a gigantic hole in the ground turn into a world-class facility I see today is truly amazing.

Ms. Plemmons, it is my pleasure to have you here today, and I look forward to hearing any information you will be sharing with this Committee. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement of Mr. Brady follows:]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Brady.

Does any other Member wish to be recognized for the purposes of an opening statement? Seeing none, I would now like to introduce our witness for today.

Ms. Beth Plemmons joined the Capitol Visitor Center in September of 2008 as Director of Visitor Services, where she worked to develop and implement the visitor-related procedures and operations, which included the delivery of 40,000 Capitol tours each week. That is a lot more than 40,000 people. Those are individual tours with many, many people. Unbelievable numbers.

Ms. Plemmons then served as Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Visitor Services from 2010 to 2011, after which she was

named the Chief Executive Officer, and has been serving in this role overseeing all aspects of the Capitol Visitor Center's operations.

Ms. Plemmons has more than 25 years in the hospitality industry. And prior to joining the Architect of the Capitol, she served as Associate Director for Guest Services at George Washington's historic Mount Vernon Estates and Gardens, as well as working for the 8,000-acre Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, for 17 years.

The Committee welcomes you, Ms. Plemmons.

And the Chair now recognizes our witness for the purposes of an opening statement.

And you are recognized for 5 minutes. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF MS. BETH PLEMMONS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER

Ms. PLEMMONS. Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Brady. Thank you so much for this opportunity to share an update on the Capitol Visitor Center operations. Let me also thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your strong support of the Capitol Visitor Center. Our staff greatly appreciated the kind comments you made on the House floor on March 5 about our team and our accomplishments as we approach our 10-year anniversary.

And thank you, Congressman Brady. The CVC is very proud to carry only products made in America, and we are grateful for your leadership in helping us achieve this distinction.

On behalf of the Architect of the Capitol, I have had the privilege of serving as the CEO for the Visitor Center since 2011 and to lead a team that is passionately dedicated to serving Congress and every visitor to the United States Capitol.

We have a tremendous civic responsibility to connect people to our great democracy. Each of our employees strives every day to meet our mission, which is working together for Congress to inform, involve, and inspire every visitor to the United States Capitol.

We remember the words of Thomas Jefferson: An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people. We regularly receive affirmation from our visitors that we are meeting our vision, which is preserving democracy one visitor at a time.

I would like to share an excerpt from a recent comment from a teacher at Ludlow-Taylor Elementary, which is a local school: "In an era of video games and smartphones, children can often be easily distracted. Not the case with your tour. The reviews I heard from the children were incredible. They were engaged, excited, and could not stop talking about what they had learned. Most importantly, the children now feel connected to the legislative process in a way that they were not before."

Since we opened our doors in December of 2008, we have welcomed almost 21 million visitors—we hope to reach 21 million by the end of this month—and provided more than 300,000 tours of the Capitol, supported more than 7,000 congressional events in our meeting spaces, welcomed guests at Presidential inaugurations, Congressional Gold Medal ceremonies, concerts, and memorial ceremonies.

We have delivered our Capitol Tour Training program to more than 37,000 staff and provided them with tools that they need to give informative and inspiring tours for our constituents and developed a full suite of informational materials, including publications in multiple languages and audio translations to assist our large number of international visitors.

We have welcomed more than 8 million visitors into our Exhibition Hall and developed a wide variety of educational tools to fulfill our mandate to inform the public about the Capitol and Congress.

Our gift shops have improved the quality and variety of our offerings and heightened our level of customer service. In addition to offering only U.S.-made products, gift items represent the work of a growing list of small businesses from across the country.

Beyond these operational successes, the Capitol Visitor Center facility has greatly enhanced the visitor experience. To appreciate the improved security, convenience, and comfort visitors enjoy today, it is helpful to go back in time to the years before there was a Capitol Visitor Center.

Although always intended to be open to the public, the Capitol was never designed to accommodate nearly 2.5 million visitors each year. Before the Visitor Center opened, constituents may have waited up to 3 hours outside before entering the Capitol. There were only five public restrooms and no food service for visitors. Visitors often roamed freely through the building on self-guided tours and, not surprisingly, they soon became lost, confused or frustrated. Many wandered into restricted areas.

Meanwhile, guides and staff leading tours had great difficulty overcoming the noise of the crowds. Even Members of Congress often struggled to reach the Chambers or other destinations in the building.

Visitors to the Capitol today have a far different experience. The average wait time to enter the CVC is usually about 7 minutes. Once inside, visitors can use any of the 26 fully accessible restrooms. The Capitol Cafe provides a place to enjoy a bite to eat, and two gift shops offer a selection of more than 2,000 items.

The 16,500-square-foot Exhibition Hall presents educational materials telling the story of Congress and the Capitol. We are excited about our plans to redesign our exhibit space, which is scheduled to be complete in 2021.

The CVC team has also continued to evolve, refining all areas of operations. While I am very proud of the milestones I have noted, I am most proud that we have never stopped exploring opportunities to work smarter, more efficiently, and more responsively to the needs of the congressional community.

Before closing, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our congressional partners for their continued support, including the House and Senate Sergeant at Arms, the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, the House and Senate curators and historians, the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services, and the Capitol Police.

The counsel and support we have received from your staff and the staff of the Senate Rules Committee has been and continues to be invaluable to our operation and critical to our success.

Again, thank you and the entire Committee for your time and for this opportunity to share information about the Capitol Visitor Center. I look forward to answering any questions you may have about our operation.

[The statement of Ms. Plemmons follows:]

Statement of Beth Plemmons, Chief Executive Officer
United States Capitol Visitor Center



The U.S. Capitol Visitor Center - Ten Years of Serving Congress and
the American People

Statement before the Committee on House Administration,
United States House of Representatives

May 16, 2018

- Statement of Beth Plemmons, Chief Executive Officer
United States Capitol Visitor Center

“The U.S. Capitol Visitor Center – Ten Years of Serving Congress
and the American People”

- Capitol Visitor Center Operations: 10-Year Overview
 - Semiannual Report: October 2017–March 2018
 - Semiannual Report: April 2017–September 2017
 - Operations Summaries: 2009–2016
 - First Semiannual Report: December 2008–March 2009

- Visitor Comments



Chairman Harper, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the Committee on House Administration, thank you for this opportunity to share an update on Capitol Visitor Center operations.

On behalf of the Architect of the Capitol, I have had the privilege of serving as the CEO for the Visitor Center since 2011 and to lead a team that is passionately dedicated to serving Congress and every visitor to the United States Capitol.

We have a tremendous civic responsibility to connect people to our great democracy. As such, each employee strives every day to meet our mission: *Working together for Congress to inform, involve and inspire every visitor to the United States Capitol.*

We remember the words of Thomas Jefferson, "An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people."

We regularly receive affirmation from our visitors that we are, indeed, meeting our mission and our vision: *Preserving democracy one visitor at a time.*

Following is a comment recently received from a teacher at a local school:

"I want to thank you for providing such a lovely tour of the Capitol for the students at Ludlow-Taylor elementary. In an era of video games and smart phones, children can often be easily distracted. Not the case with your tour! The reviews I heard from the children were incredible. They were engaged, excited and couldn't stop talking about what they had learned. Most importantly, the children now feel connected to the legislative process, in a way that they were not before. Many of these children live just blocks from the Capitol, yet have never even come close to it. Your tour provided them access they would not have had otherwise, and I hope, encouraged many of them to become even more engaged in our free republic and all that it affords each one of us. So, thank you again for making the children feel so welcome. It warms my heart to know how much time you took to make sure the children had a wonderful Capitol tour experience. It exceeded everyone's expectations and for that, I am so grateful."

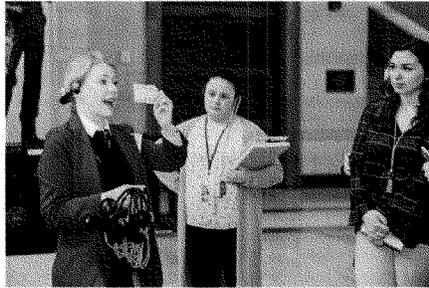


Visitor Guide Ronn Jackson with a school group in the Capitol Rotunda.

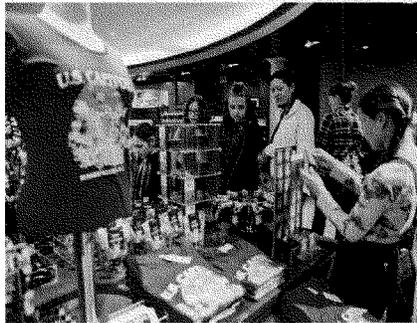
Warm Regards,
Kimberly Halkett

Since we opened our doors on December 2, 2008...

- We have welcomed almost 21 million visitors and provided more than 300,000 tours of the Capitol.
- We have supported more than 7,000 congressional events in our meeting spaces.
- We have welcomed and assisted guests at presidential inaugurations, Congressional Gold Medal ceremonies, concerts, and memorial ceremonies in the Capitol Rotunda and Emancipation Hall.
- We have developed a Capitol Tour Training program to provide congressional staff the tools they need to deliver informative and inspiring tours for your constituents to include critical safety and emergency evacuation procedures. To date, more than 37,000 interns and other staff have participated in the training.
- We have developed a full suite of informational materials to offer visitors a wealth of information about the Capitol and the Congress.
- We also offer publications in multiple languages and provide audio translations, to assist our large number of international visitors.
- We have welcomed more than 8 million visitors into our Exhibition Hall and have developed a wide variety of educational tools, in keeping with our congressional mandate, to inform the public about the Capitol and the Congress.



Visitor Guide Kathleen Gary explains gallery pass distribution during a Capitol Tour Training program for congressional staff.



Our Gift Shops are self-sustaining, as a result of our teams efforts to enhance both the quality and variety of our offerings and the level of customer service. I am also pleased to tell you that, in addition to offering only U.S. made products, gift items are developed exclusively for our shops and represent the work of an ever-growing list of small businesses from across the country.

Merchandise inspired by the Cherry Blossom Festival helped generate strong spring season sales in the Capitol Visitor Center Gift Shops.

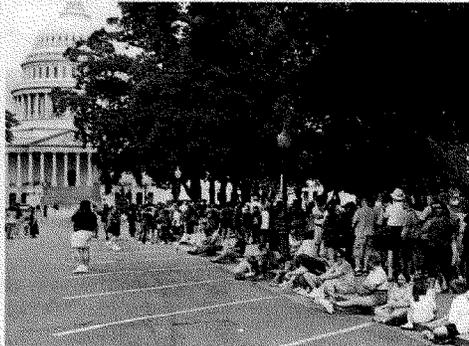
In addition to these operational successes, the Capitol Visitor Center facility itself has greatly enhanced the visitor experience.

To appreciate the improved security, convenience, and comfort visitors enjoy today, it is helpful to go back in time to the years before there was a Capitol Visitor Center.

The Capitol is the “working home” of our representative government. Although always intended to be open to the public, the Capitol was never designed to accommodate the growing number of visitors – approximately 2.5 million individuals each year.

On a hot summer day in the 1990s, constituents may have waited up to three hours outside without shelter before entering the Capitol.

There were only five public restrooms in the Capitol and no food services for visitors. Instead, thousands of constituents made their way to the House and Senate Office Building cafeterias. That resulted in long lines at those facilities and difficulties for congressional staff hoping to grab a quick bite and return to their offices.



Before the Capitol Visitor Center, visitors waited on line outside and without shelter for up to three hours before entering the Capitol.

Inside the Capitol, visitors often roamed freely through the building on self-guided tours. Not surprisingly, they soon became lost, confused and frustrated. Many wandered into restricted areas.

Only a few exhibits inside the Crypt of the Capitol provided visitors any interpretation about the Capitol and the work of Congress.

Meanwhile, guides and congressional staff leading tours had great difficulty overcoming the noise of the crowds that congested every space and corridor. Even Members of Congress often struggled to reach the Chambers or other destinations in the building. Evacuating the Capitol during severe overcrowding was a growing concern.

Congress understood that this was neither a secure nor an appropriate way to welcome and treat their constituents who came to see democracy in action.

Security concerns moved to the forefront when nearly 20 years ago, in July 1998, two Capitol Police Officers were killed by a gunman as he moved through a screening device that was already inside the Capitol.

As planning and design of the Capitol Visitor Center progressed, the events of 9/11 and the Anthrax attack on Hart Senate Office Building a month later prompted Congress to provide the funding necessary to move the project into construction.

As site preparation began, the Capitol Visitor Center project changed in scope to include significant additional space for the House, the Senate, and the U.S. Capitol Police, as well as a new tunnel to the Library of Congress. Secure meeting rooms and hearing rooms were included in the expanded project. Among a number of functional improvements was the inclusion of a subterranean loading dock that would keep delivery trucks away from the face of the Capitol.

Visitors to the Capitol today have a far different experience. Average wait time to enter the CVC is approximately seven minutes. Once inside, visitors can use any of 26 fully accessible restrooms, including 10 family restrooms.

The Capitol Cafe provides visitors the opportunity to enjoy a bite to eat before or after their tour.

Two Gift Shops provide visitors the opportunity to select from more than 2,000 items.



Emancipation Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center

And a 16,500-square-foot Exhibition Hall presents historic documents, artifacts, and other means to tell the story of the Congress and the Capitol. We are excited about our plans to redesign our exhibit space, which is scheduled to be complete in 2021.

The CVC team has also continued to evolve, refining all areas of operations. While I am very proud of the milestones I have noted, I am most proud of the fact that we have not, nor will we ever, rest on our laurels. We have never stopped exploring opportunities to work smarter, more efficiently, and most importantly, to be ever more responsive to the needs of the congressional community.

Toward this end, in 2015, through a highly collaborative process involving staff at all levels of our operation, we developed a comprehensive and aggressive five-year Strategic and Operations Plan. This plan is comprised of 172 individual project plans and objectives that we began to implement early in 2016. The plan will continue to serve as our road map through 2020. Presently, we are on pace to complete every one of our objectives, each of which is in some way aimed at enhancing our service to Congress, strengthening our relationship with the congressional community, and inspiring approximately 2.5 million visitors we welcome to the Capitol each year.

In closing, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our congressional partners for their continued support during these past nine and half years to include the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms, the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, the House and Senate Curators and Historians, the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services and the U.S. Capitol Police.



In recent months, the Capitol Visitor Center has been collaborating closely with House and Senate Curators and Historians, as well as other congressional partners, to review plans for the redesign of Exhibition Hall.

The CVC has benefited in particular from the leadership and guidance provided by our Oversight Committees—the Committee on House Administration and the Senate Rules Committee. We have met regularly with Oversight Committee staffs since the very early days of operations, engaging in insightful discussions about how to best meet our goal of ensuring that the CVC serves the interest of Congress. The counsel and support we have received from your staff and the staff of the Senate Rules Committee has been and continues to be invaluable to our operation and critical to our success.

Capitol Visitor Center Operations – 10-Year Overview



- Semiannual Report: October 2017–March 2018
- Semiannual Report: April 2017–September 2017
- Operations Summaries: 2009-1016
- First Semiannual Report: December 2008 – March 2009

Content Summary:

Pursuant to the Capitol Visitor Center Act of 2008, the Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) has submitted a Semiannual Report to the Committee on House Administration and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration since the facility opened in December 2008.

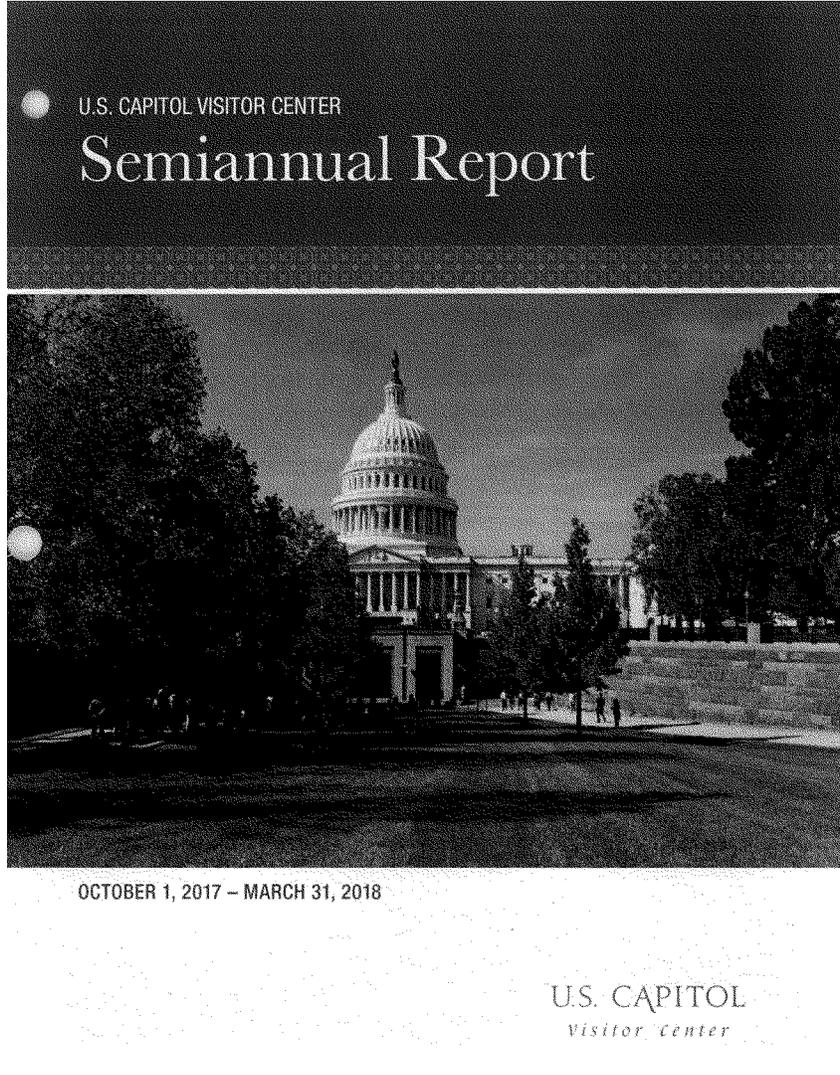
The reports provide a full review of CVC activities and initiatives that have been undertaken as the CVC team has worked each year to enhance its service.

For the purposes of this submission and to provide a comprehensive overview of “Ten Years of Service to Congress and the American People,” the “Operations Summary” for each report in the CVC’s 9.5-year history is provided. In addition, the full narratives for the CVC’s most recent two Semiannual Reports are included. These reports, covering the period from April 2017 through March 2018, provide the

Committee on House Administration a more comprehensive overview of current Capitol Visitor Center operations, educational initiatives, support functions, and facility improvement projects.

Also provided is the CVC’s first Semiannual Report (December 2008–March 2009), which provides details about the start-up of CVC operations and the challenges the CVC team faced as it implemented a new tour entry process for the United States Capitol.





Background

On October 20, 2008, the president signed legislation designating the newly completed construction project at the United States Capitol as the “United States Capitol Visitor Center.” On December 2, 2008, coinciding with the 145th anniversary of the Statue of Freedom’s placement atop the Capitol Dome, the Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) officially opened its doors to the public. As of the end of this reporting period, March 31, 2018, the CVC had welcomed 20,483,863 visitors since opening its doors in December 2008 and expects to welcome visitor 21 million in late May 2018.

The collaboration with and guidance of its congressional oversight committees and congressional partners is critical to the success of CVC operations.

The Goals of the Capitol Visitor Center

Throughout its history, the U.S. Capitol has evolved in response to a changing nation. Not only is the U.S. Capitol a working office building, it is also an historic destination replete with collections of artifacts, paintings, photographs and documents. Over three decades, annual visitation to the U.S. Capitol tripled, and Congress recognized that visitors needed

improved amenities, accessibility, and provisions for safety and security. Congress also understood that visitors desired an opportunity to learn about the work of Congress and the art, architecture and history of the U.S. Capitol – a building that is an international icon and symbol of representative democracy. The CVC was built to respond to these needs and, as stated in the 1999 Project Revalidation Study, its design was guided by four primary goals:

- **Security:** Provide a secure public environment to welcome and manage a large number of visitors and to protect the U.S. Capitol, its occupants and guests in an atmosphere of open access
- **Visitor Education:** Establish and present informative programs on the workings and history of Congress, the legislative process, and the art and architecture of the U.S. Capitol

In accordance with 2 USC 2201 et seq., this report and attached appendix of financial statements covers the six-month reporting period beginning October 1, 2017, and ending March 31, 2018. As required by statute, this report includes a description of current operations, the implementation of new policies and procedures, and future plans for each operational function.

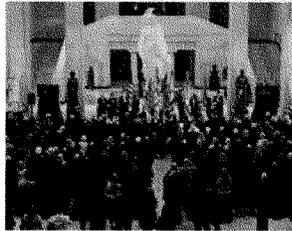


CVC staff provide world class customer service throughout the U.S. Capitol.

U.S. Capitol Visitor Center Semiannual Report

October 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018

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- **Visitor Comfort:** Provide the amenities, comfort, convenience, and accessibility for visitors appropriate to one of the nation's most visited tourist destinations

- **Functional Improvements:** Provide modern, efficient facilities for functions such as truck loading and deliveries and create improved connections between the U.S. Capitol and the Library of Congress (LOC)



Visitor Guides led Sen. Cory Booker's staff on the Freedom Fighters Tour to commemorate Frederick Douglass' birthday.

With these goals in mind, the CVC project design team evaluated a site validation study in August 1999 to confirm the most suitable location for the facility. With its immediate proximity to the U.S. Capitol, its location on the central axis with the East Front, and its ability to provide a direct, protected connection to the U.S. Capitol, the East Plaza was reaffirmed as the most appropriate site for the CVC. The facility would be situated below ground to respect the original Frederick Law Olmsted 1874 landscape design and to maintain the procession to and presentation of the historic building.

Inform, Involve, Inspire

As stated in the Strategic and Operations Plan, the CVC's mission is "Working together for Congress to inform, involve and inspire every visitor to the United States Capitol." This statement conveys the CVC's goal to provide a welcoming and educational environment for visitors to learn about the House, the Senate and the legislative process as well as the history of the art and architecture of the U.S. Capitol.

As the CVC implements the many facets of the Strategic and Operations Plan, the CVC team works each day to fulfill the vision of "Preserving democracy one visitor at a time." Through an inspiring orientation film, tours, educational programs, statuary, printed materials, and the presentation of noteworthy documents and artifacts, the CVC experience helps stimulate discussions of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship in a representative democracy and celebrates the role that Congress plays in the daily lives of American citizens.

[Our Visitor Guide Dan Pearson] ... had my students hanging on his every word. His additional knowledge of [our state's] connection to the building was incredible. We cannot thank him enough.

— SUSIE K.

Two theaters within Exhibition Hall present films to educate visitors about the operations of the House and the Senate and to encourage civic engagement.

In the CVC's central gathering space, Emancipation Hall, visitors can view the original plaster model for the Statue of Freedom and study statues from the National Statuary Hall Collection. These statues highlight the diversity of Americans and celebrate the contributions of notable citizens to the nation. Among the 25 statues in the CVC are:

Apollo 13 astronaut and congressman-elect from Colorado, John L. "Jack" Swigert Jr.; Alabama's Helen Keller; and Utah's "father of television" Philo T. Farnsworth.

Congressional leadership has used Emancipation Hall for numerous special events since the CVC's opening, including bust unveilings and Congressional Gold Medal ceremonies. In this reporting period there have been three Congressional Gold Medal ceremonies: one honoring the Filipino veterans of World War II;



During a busy moment at the Information Desk, a Visitor Assistant had a smile and passes for a visitor.

[Our Visitor Guide Maryellen Bradford] would rank among the top tour guides we have ever had. It's great to see such enthusiasm for the job and her desire to share the rich history of the U.S. Capitol. Thank you.
 — TOM AND CHRIS M.

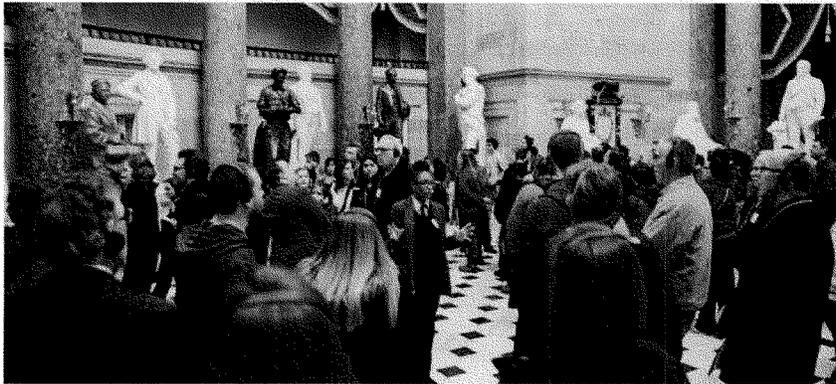
one honoring former Senator Robert Dole; and one honoring World War II's Office of Strategic Services.

While designed as the visitor's gateway to the historic U.S. Capitol, the CVC also offers convenient amenities including the Capitol Cafe, two Gift Shops, and two Information Desks, all of which are managed by a well-trained staff of service professionals who are dedicated to delivering world-class service to the congressional community and the public.

Visitor Experience

The CVC saw an 8 percent monthly average increase in visitation during the reporting period, compared to the same months in 2016-2017. From October 1, 2017, through March 31, 2018, the CVC welcomed more than 931,500 visitors to the U.S. Capitol with informative and inspiring experiences. In December 2017, the 20 millionth visitor, since opening in December 2008, came through the doors.

As spring visitation began, more than a quarter million visitors came to the CVC in March with



Visitor Guides shared the history of Statuary Hall with their tour groups.

The process you use to handle the hordes is very pleasant and professional. My tour guide [David Linn] was a delight. He made us feel like we were his only tour of the day when we knew better.

— CINDY H.

March 27 being the busiest day of the month with 15,560 visitors.

Throughout the reporting period, the CVC worked to create a consistent visitor experience, connecting the Gift Shops and the Capitol Cafe to Exhibition Hall and the Capitol Tour. In the Gift Shops, visitors could purchase new merchandise reflective of the Exhibition Hall exhibit rotation, “Congress and the World Wars.” In the Capitol Cafe, visitors enjoyed recipes inspired by the ration cookbooks of the World Wars period. In addition, new photo murals grace the walls around the dish drops: the Brumidi Corridors around the north dish drop and the Hall of Columns around the south dish drop. These efforts ensure that all the elements of the visitors’ experiences reinforce each other and support the CVC’s mission and vision.

Preparing for Peak Season

To prepare congressional offices for the spring and summer peak season, the CVC held the annual Information Exchange in February. Nearly 200



The Capitol Tour Training program attracted record numbers of participants.

congressional staff attended. The CVC’s Director of Visitor Services, representatives of the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms, the U.S. Capitol Police and the AOC’s Fire Marshall addressed the group, providing information about the tour route, ticketing, the House and Senate galleries and safety and security.

The Capitol Tour Training program continued to attract record numbers of participants. In this class, congressional staff, interns and military liaisons learned the tour route, received information to personalize tours to their state, learned about the art, architecture and history of the U.S. Capitol, and received briefings from the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms and the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services (OCAS). During the reporting period, 1,380 people attended the 24 classes offered, a 17 percent increase over this same period last year.

Specialty and Grounds Tours

With expanded promotion by Visitor Guides and Visitor Assistants, colorful digital signage installed throughout the building, and outreach on social media and on local community calendars, more and more visitors are enjoying the specialty tours.



A Visitor Guide pointed out the art in the beautiful Brumidi Corridors during a Halls of the Senate Tour. Limited to 15 people, this tour provides a more intimate experience in the U.S. Capitol.

Limited to 15 people, these tours provide an intimate experience in the U.S. Capitol.

Participation in both specialty tours increased significantly compared to this reporting period last year, October 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017.

Offered Monday through Friday at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., the Halls of the Senate Tour takes visitors through the beautiful Brumidi Corridors. Participation increased nearly 77 percent.

[Education Specialists Matthew Ericson and MaryBeth Wagner] showed us their favorite exhibit pieces and gave us information that would not have been readily available otherwise. They did an exceptional job and made it a truly wonderful experience. Many thanks."

— CYNTHIA N.

The Freedom Fighters in the Capitol Collection Tour introduces visitors to four ordinary Americans (Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Senator Charles Sumner and Philo T. Farnsworth) whose extraordinary actions changed the course of our civil

rights history. Offered Monday through Friday at 1 p.m., participation in this tour increased nearly 94 percent.

Visitor Guides lead outdoor tours of the U.S. Capitol Grounds Monday through Saturday at 1 p.m. during May, June, September and October. On these tours, visitors learn about the memorial trees, fountains, sculptures and the historic events that continue to take place in this beautiful setting.

Exhibits and Programming

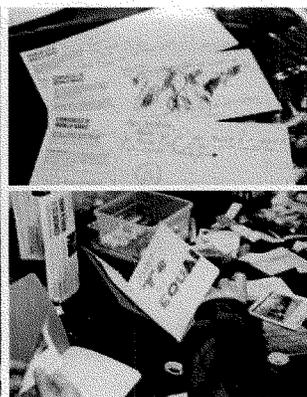
During the reporting period, the CVC presented an increasing number of public programs in Exhibition Hall. During the winter, the CVC experimented with program formats, gathering feedback on visitor engagement and considering program options during Exhibition Hall's closure in early 2019.

Programs included:

- **Family Thursdays**, which typically combined an educational presentation with a hands-on activity geared to children seven and older. In this period, participants:
 - Wrote messages for military personnel serving overseas in conjunction with the exhibit "Congress and the World Wars."



Family Thursday programs engaged visitors of all ages with activities related to the Exhibition Hall rotation or a historic event.



The CVC forwarded letters written by visitors to service members as part of Family Thursday programming in November.



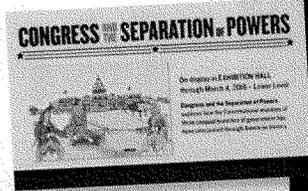
A Visitor Guide asked questions about the “Frieze of American History” during a game of History Jargon Jeopardy. The activity has become quite popular with visitors.

- o Made a journal to honor the historic 1913 Women’s Suffrage Parade.
- o Created collages about the lives of Jeannette Rankin and Sojourner Truth.
- o Created mobiles about the three branches of government in conjunction with the exhibit “Congress and the Separation of Powers.”
- **Talking Points**, where an expert discussed a topic related to the exhibit. Highlights included:
 - o LOC Liaison Specialist Owen Rogers discussed the intersection of immigration and World War I military service.
 - o Megan Harris, from the LOC’s Veterans History Project (VHP), shared details about the collection of Robert Ware, a medical officer killed on D-Day.
 - o VHP’s Candace Milburn shared letters and oral history transcripts about the nurses who served during World War I.
- **Seen On Screen**, in which a CVC staff member or visiting expert hosted a screening of an archival film, establishing the historical context and tying the film to exhibit content. Staff members then invited visitors to respond to what they had seen. Programs featured films related to the Marshall Plan, the G.I. Bill of Rights, and George Washington’s crossing of the Delaware River.
- **Fact or Fiction Fridays** invited visitors to contrast and compare historic documents to events presented in video clips from educational and classic movies. Films included “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,” “The Powers of Congress,” “The Rosa Parks Story,” and “Iron Jawed Angels” about the 1913 women’s suffrage parade.

No matter what political views you follow, everyone should visit the Capitol in person. One will inescapably have a renewed or new-found sense of gratefulness and pride in the freedom our country ensures.

— DAVE S.

- **History Jargon Jeopardy** featured a game show-like format with questions focused on the separation of powers and the history of the U.S. Capitol. In a short time, this program proved very popular with visitors and has promise for future programming.
- **Stories in the Old Senate Chamber** featured CVC interpreters presenting stories based on events that took place in this historic space. Launched in March, this program brought the Old Senate Chamber to life for visitors through gripping tales of debate and action.



Rotating exhibits during the reporting period focused on “Congress and the World Wars” and “Congress and the Separation of Powers.”

Visitors experienced two rotating exhibits in Exhibition Hall during this reporting period. The second installment of “Congress and the World Wars,” opened September 2017, and focused on how Congress responded to the issues facing the nation in the years following World War I and World War II. Highlights included the Joint Resolution establishing the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Joint Resolution introducing the 19th Amendment for Women’s Suffrage, the U.N. Charter, and the Marshall Plan.

Beginning in March, “Congress and the Separation of Powers” focused on how Congress balances, shapes and challenges the powers of the other branches of the federal government. Highlights of the exhibit include S.1, the bill version of the Judiciary Act of 1789 and the first act introduced in the first session of the Senate, and a telegram from Dr. Martin Luther

King, Jr., and other civil rights leaders urging passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957.

With the opening of “Congress and the Separation of Powers,” the CVC expanded its partnership with the United States Capitol Historical Society (USCHS). An evening reception for congressional staff, CVC stakeholders and USCHS members offered an after-hours look at the new exhibit and included remarks from CVC Chief Executive Officer Beth Plemmons; Chair of the USCHS Board of Trustees Don Carlson; political pundit Mark Shields; and CVC Curator Christine Blackerby. More than 60 guests attended the event.

The students were shouting “best field trip ever!” Thank you again for all that you do.
— LAURA G.



The CVC Curator shared highlights of “Congress and the Separation of Powers” at a reception co-hosted with the U.S. Capitol Historical Society.

Morning at the Museum

For the second year in a row, the CVC supported Morning at the Museum with the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services. This year, the program welcomed 29 families with children with sensory processing disorders. Each family was paired with a specially trained Visitor Guide for a custom Capitol Tour. CVC educators created targeted materials to enrich the families’ U.S. Capitol experiences. One mother wrote:

“We did have an AWESOME time at the Capitol (my son liked the tour better than the Air and Space (Museum))! ... The experience re-enforces the pride of being an American.”



Visitor Guides role-played members of Congress chairing a committee hearing during an Environment Matters student program.

Student Programs and Teacher Workshops

For the 2017-2018 student program season, the CVC welcomed 1,442 students in 30 programs from October through early March.

The children now feel connected to the legislative process, in a way that they were not before. Many of these children live just blocks from the Capitol, yet have never even come close to it. [The tour] exceeded everyone's expectations and for that, I am so grateful.

— KIMBERLY H.

The three programs, Art Appreciators, Capitol Art and Environment Matters, engage students from elementary through high school in activities and discussions aimed at revealing the legislative process and works of art at the U.S. Capitol.

While built on a standard program model, the CVC can tailor programs to meet the needs of specific groups. For example, the Environment Matters: How Does a Bill Become a Law? program focuses on the Chesapeake Bay to understand the impact of Congress. This fall, the CVC worked with the Severn School in Annapolis where the teachers integrated the program throughout the seventh grade curriculum. Over the first semester in the English, science and history/civics classes, the students

learned about the Chesapeake Bay and the legislative process, culminating in the visit to the U.S. Capitol for the tour and the interactive program.

In February, an Arlington, VA, school's third graders participated in a student program, including a class of students with autism. CVC staff created special materials and provided them in advance to help prepare the autistic students for their upcoming experience. Once in the CVC, the staff offered a quieter, sensory-reduced experience to better suit the needs of those particular students. Following the program, the teacher wrote:

"Thank you for a wonderful tour. It is a field trip that our students will remember! You all did a great job, and thank you for being so flexible. I would highly recommend this trip for other students and grade levels. Thank you for your help."



Students use their own ideas to design statues in both the Art Appreciators and the Capitol Art student programs.



The March teacher workshop focused on "Congress and Time." It featured tours of the clocks in the U.S. Capitol and (top) the making of sundials.

In both Art Appreciators and Capitol Art, the students role-play as members of Congress. They must determine whom to honor with a statue in the U.S. Capitol. They also decide the location of the statue in the U.S. Capitol and the material to use. This season, in addition to their parents, students chose Sally Ride, Jane Goodall, Harriet Tubman, Walt Disney and Michael Jackson among others.

For the first time this school year, the CVC participated in USCHS's student program, "We the People," which provides Washington, D.C., public and charter school students with an in-depth, in-person look at the Constitution and the three branches of government. The students visited the Lincoln Memorial, the U.S. Capitol, the White House Visitor Center and the National Archives. The students enjoyed a thematic presentation from educators and interpreters at each stop, deepening their understanding about the Constitution and the work of each of the three branches of government.

At the U.S. Capitol, students toured the West Front with the USCHS and then met a CVC educator for a tour of Exhibition Hall and the Rotunda. The students considered how the idea of "We the People" evolved as the United States grew. The CVC is especially pleased to reach so many Washington, D.C., students, for whom the U.S. Capitol is both a local and national monument. Over the course of this season, from November 1 through early March,



31 sessions of "We the People" brought 1,087 students (nearly half of all eighth graders in these schools) and teachers to the CVC, where the students also enjoyed lunch in the Capitol Cafe.

The CVC also hosted two teacher workshops during this reporting period. The first, in November, focused on the role of Congress in federal holidays. In March, teachers learned about the role of Congress and Time. Curriculum connections included both STEM learning and civic education. The March workshop featured a sundial activity with Children's Education Specialist at the Botanic Garden (BG) Lee Coykendall, and a tour of the U.S. Capitol with House of Representatives Curator Farar Elliott. One teacher commented:

"I enjoyed the discussion, analytical thinking and interaction. I truly enjoyed the tour and literacy activity as it relates to holidays. Another said, "Wonderful workshop! I found it engaging and enjoyed the discussions and the tour."

Lying in Honor of Reverend Billy Graham

The CVC's preparations for the Lying in Honor of Reverend Billy Graham began upon the announcement of the event. The CVC developed visitor flow plans and assisted with wayfinding and directing visitors into the Rotunda to pay their respects. The CVC also staffed the condolence book tables.

[Our Visitor Guide] Kathleen Gary's pride and respect for where she is and what she does shows through and is contagious.

— EILEEN B.

The CVC proudly supports ceremonies hosted by Congress in the U.S. Capitol. At such times, CVC staff assist with wayfinding and welcoming of guests throughout the U.S. Capitol, and CVC shuttles bring invited guests from their busses to the CVC entrance.

Whenever possible during closures for these events, the CVC facilitates congressional staff-led tours and adjusts operations to continue providing an engaging experience for visitors. Such operational changes can include modified tours of the U.S. Capitol and tours through Exhibition Hall, looking up through the skylights to discuss the U.S. Capitol.



CVC staff assisted visitors at the Lying in Honor of Reverend Billy Graham from the CVC entrance to the balcony to the Rotunda.

Ceremonies

- October 25 – **Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony in honor of the Filipino Veterans of World War II**
- November 8 – **Dedication of the American Prisoners of War/Missing in Action commemorative chair**
- December 6 – **Annual Lighting of the Capitol Christmas Tree**
- January 17 – **Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony honoring Senator Bob Dole**
- January 30 – **State of the Union**
- February 14 – **Bicentennial Anniversary of Frederick Douglass' Birth**
- February 28 – **Lying in Honor of the Reverend Billy Graham**
- March 21 – **Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony in honor of the Office of Strategic Services**



I left not only thinking [the Capitol Tour] was one of the highlights of our trip to Washington but proud that you do such a good job representing our country to everyone who visits.

—NORMAN S.



Every day, for every occasion, CVC staff help visitors coming to the U.S. Capitol.

Visitor Surveys

During the reporting period, the CVC interviewed visitors to Exhibition Hall, focusing on their motivations for visiting and their expectations for their experience at the U.S. Capitol. Interviews with families and school groups explored younger visitors' experiences and what parents and teachers hoped these visits might offer.

Many visitors wanted to "see what it's like to be inside" the U.S. Capitol, because it's "as close as you can get to history." For some, the experience of being inside the U.S. Capitol was their chief expectation, but many others wanted to be further engaged.

Many came with an interest to learn more about U.S. history and American government. Visitors had vastly different expectations based upon their age, knowledge level and interests, including:

- Parents and chaperones who wanted to enhance the lessons their young visitors are learning in school
- Adults who wanted a refresher on what they forgot since high school

- Foreign visitors who wanted to compare their own political systems to the United States'
- Visitors who wanted to learn more about a particular subject of interest
- Highly knowledgeable visitors who wanted to dig deeper into the subtleties of the past or how Congress works

Others were most interested in learning more about citizenship: how to get involved politically, their rights as citizens, and how to engage with their members of Congress.

A notable subset are immigrants who visit the U.S. Capitol to educate themselves about the country they now call home, both in terms of its history and government, and their place as citizens.

Parents and school chaperones reaffirmed previous findings that the visit enhanced school lessons. But beyond this, adults bringing young visitors also anticipated benefits beyond academic learning. Many hoped that the trip would offer children an opportunity to think more broadly about the world and their place in it.

Exhibition Hall

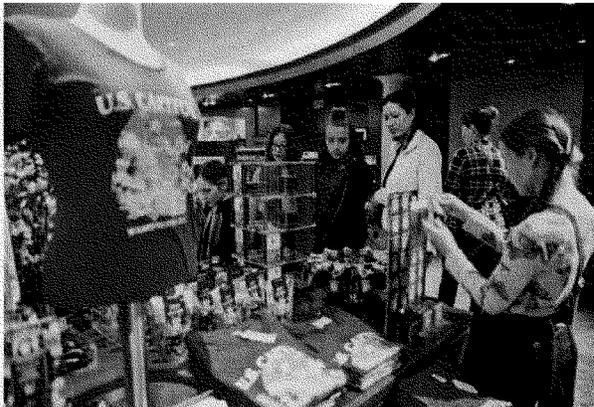
The CVC continues to move forward with the planned redesign of Exhibition Hall. The goal is for visitors to come away understanding their role in our representative democracy and the relevance of Congress in their lives. In mid-October, the AOC awarded the architecture and engineering/exhibit design contract to the architecture and engineering firm, HGA, and the exhibit design firm, Gallagher & Associates.

During this reporting period, these firms translated the interpretation plan, developed earlier in 2017, into a schematic design. This critical period of the process defined the envisioned visitor experience in Exhibition Hall. The team is committed to creating a space that is more welcoming and more relatable, using different finishes, greater openness, and color and light. Throughout the process, the CVC briefed and received input from Capitol Hill historians and curators, colleagues at the LOC and the National Archives and Records Administration, other AOC offices, and congressional leadership.

Gift Shops, Capitol Cafe and Special Events

In December, the Gift Shops (Shops) hosted a well-received, after-hours shopping time for congressional staff. Holiday ornaments and gift candy were top-sellers throughout the season, several developed exclusively for the Shops. As always, the Shops only stock merchandise that is made in the United States.

Shops sales began a decline in November that continued through early 2018, compared to FY 2017 when the election and inauguration drove stronger sales. In addition, last year's stock included a special, one-time purchase of adult and youth apparel offered at promotional prices that sold well.



The Gift Shops featured a selection of Cherry Blossom-related merchandise in March.

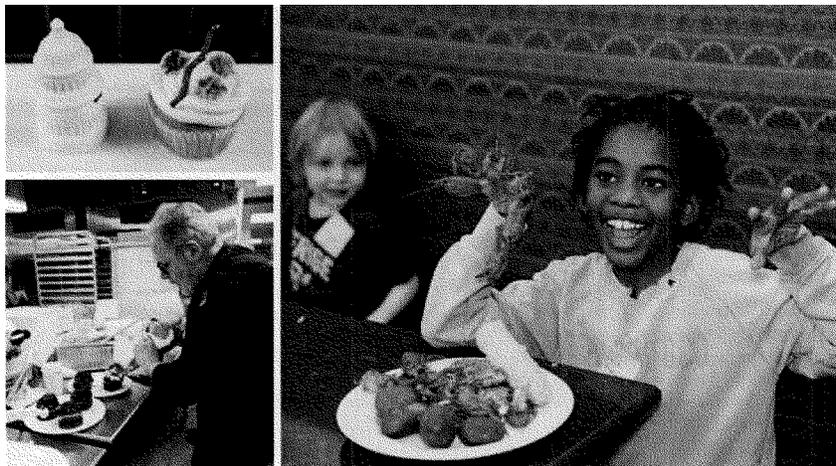
During the reporting period, the Shops featured books and gift items that supported the themes of "Congress and the World Wars," such as vintage World War II posters, postcards and gifts with the Rosie the Riveter image.

The theme for spring was cherry blossoms, and each Shop featured a full collection of apparel, jewelry, commemoratives and gift candy. Many of the items were developed exclusively for the Shops.

During the last week of January, the Shops converted to a new point of sale system that will expand our capabilities and prepare for future growth.



Visitors of all ages enjoyed our Made In America selection of merchandise.



The Capitol Cafe's chef created tempting items for visitors, including the crayfish at the American Bounty station.

The Capitol Cafe (Cafe) enjoyed a strong reporting period. Sales increased 11 percent compared to this same period in FY 2017.

In December, the Cafe featured sugar cookies decorated with the U.S. Capitol and the Capitol Christmas Tree. And in the spring, the Cafe offered an assortment of delicious and visually appealing desserts reflecting the cherry blossom season. A white chocolate

replica of the Dome, filled with berries and whipped cream, has delighted visitors.

During the reporting period, the Cafe made several changes to improve the dining experience of visitors with disabilities. The Cafe placed an assortment of bottled beverages on the lower shelf of the beverage display case. The Cafe also installed an easier-to-access water dispenser at one of the soda stations.



School groups filled the Capitol Cafe in March, when chicken tenders and pizza slices topped the best-sellers list.

The Cafe replaced all the dining room chairs and installed digital monitors over each food station to better identify food offerings. Photo murals now grace each dish drop, further connecting the visitor experience in the U.S. Capitol to the CVC. The north side features the Brumidi Corridors, and the south features the Hall of Columns.

As part of the CVC's ongoing commitment to provide outstanding service to Congress, the CVC hosted 381 events during the reporting period.



A Visitor Assistant answers visitor questions in Emancipation Hall.

Strategic and Operations Plan Update

The CVC continued to make progress implementing the goals of its five-year Strategic and Operations Plan. In the midst of the third year, the CVC works every day to fulfill its mission of working together for Congress to inform, involve and inspire every visitor to the U.S. Capitol. Highlights include:

- Developed and implemented joint programs with partners including a teacher workshop with the U.S. Botanic Garden and the opening reception for “Congress and the Separation of Powers” with the USCHS.
- Launched an electronic survey to the congressional community regarding aspects of their interaction with the CVC.
- Ensured that staff training reinforced and supported CVC core values.
- Implemented technology to consolidate visitor data from multiple sources into a dashboard style report.

[Our Visitor Guide] exhibited the rarest mix of deep subject matter knowledge, patience and charm, wit and overall fun.

— ANDREA L.

Looking Ahead

The CVC will continue to provide visitors with an enriching and engaging U.S. Capitol experience during the spring and summer peak visitation months. In addition:

- The CVC will train Visitor Guides to lead the newly imagined Capitol Tour. Expected to launch in March 2019, the new tour will be more thematic, giving visitors a better understanding of Congress, the role of the individual in our “experiment in self-government,” and how the U.S. Capitol reflects the evolving roles of Congress and the nation.
- The CVC will continue to explore opportunities to further expand the reach and impact of educational and public programs.
- The partnership between the CVC and the USCHS will continue with a September symposium that will include panel discussions with local academic experts, journalists and historians expanding on the themes presented in “Congress and the Separation of Powers.” The CVC and the USCHS will also present a series of informal discussions on exhibit themes and topics.
- The CVC and BG will continue to collaborate with two workshops planned for 2019, one for teachers and one for museum educators.
- The schematic design for Exhibition Hall will be completed this summer. The follow-on contract to complete exhibit design is in the early, pre-award stage. The Exhibition Hall project team plans to select a construction management contractor by the end of summer so that pre-construction work can begin. ■

U.S. CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER
Semiannual Report



APRIL 1, 2017 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2017

U.S. CAPITOL
Visitor Center

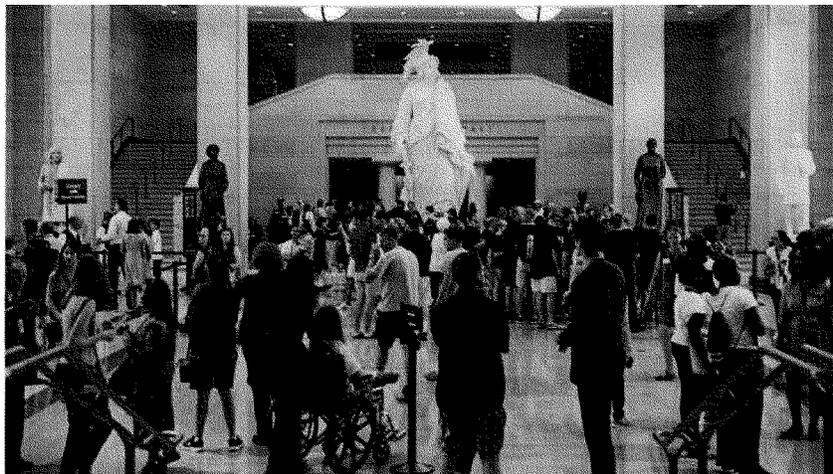
Capitol Visitor Center Semiannual Report

April 1, 2017 – September 30, 2017

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The Statue of Freedom seems to greet visitors in Emancipation Hall.

Background

On October 20, 2008, the president signed legislation designating the newly completed construction project at the United States Capitol as the “United States Capitol Visitor Center.” On December 2, 2008, coinciding with the 145th anniversary of the Statue of Freedom’s placement atop the Capitol Dome, the Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) officially opened its doors to the public. As of the end of this reporting period, September 30, 2017, the CVC had welcomed 19,552,203 visitors since opening its doors in December 2008.

Critical to the success of CVC operations continues to be the collaboration with and guidance of its congressional oversight committees and congressional partners.

The highlight of our Washington trip was our Capitol Tour. (Our Visitor Guide’s passion, knowledge, excitement and the way he engaged and interacted with the group was World Class!!! We were so lucky to learn from him!!!!

— CHRIS GOOD
PITTSBURGH, PA

The Goals of the Capitol Visitor Center

Throughout its history, the Capitol has evolved in response to a changing nation. Not only is the Capitol a working office building, it is also an historic destination replete with collections of artifacts, paintings, photographs and documents. Over three decades, annual visitation to the Capitol tripled, and Congress recognized that visitors needed improved amenities, accessibility, and provisions for safety and security. Congress also understood that visitors desired an opportunity to learn about the work of Congress and the art, architecture and history of the Capitol — a building that is an international icon and symbol of representative democracy. The CVC was built to respond to these needs and, as stated in the 1999 Project Revalidation Study, its design was guided by four primary goals:

- **Security:** Provide a secure public environment to welcome and manage a large number of visitors

In accordance with 2 USC 2201 et seq., this report and attached appendix of financial statements covers the six-month reporting period beginning April 1, 2017, and ending September 30, 2017. As required by statute, this report includes a description of current operations, the implementation of new policies and procedures, and future plans for each operational function.

and to protect the Capitol, its occupants and guests in an atmosphere of open access

- **Visitor Education:** Establish and present informative programs on the workings and history of Congress, the legislative process, and the art and architecture of the Capitol
- **Visitor Comfort:** Provide the amenities, comfort, convenience, and accessibility for visitors appropriate to one of the nation's most visited tourist destinations
- **Functional Improvements:** Provide modern, efficient facilities for functions such as truck loading and deliveries, and create improved connections between the Capitol and the Library of Congress

With these goals in mind, the CVC project design team evaluated a site validation study in August 1999 to confirm the most suitable location for the facility. With its immediate proximity to the Capitol, its location on the central axis with the East Front, and its ability to provide a direct, protected connection to the Capitol, the East Plaza was reaffirmed as the most appropriate site for the CVC. The facility would be situated below ground to respect the original Frederick Law Olmsted 1874 landscape design and to maintain the procession to and presentation of the historic building.

Inform, Involve, Inspire

As stated in the CVC's Strategic and Operations Plan, the CVC's mission is "Working together for Congress to inform, involve and inspire every visitor to the United States Capitol." This statement conveys the CVC's goal to provide a welcoming and educational environment for visitors to learn about the House, the Senate and the legislative process as well as the history of the art and architecture of the Capitol.

As the CVC implements the many facets of its Strategic and Operations Plan, the CVC team works each day to fulfill the vision of "Preserving democracy one visitor at a time." Through an inspiring orientation film, tours, educational programs, statuary, printed materials, and the presentation of noteworthy documents and artifacts, the CVC experience helps stimulate discussions of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship in a representative democracy and celebrates the role that Congress plays in the daily lives of American citizens. Two theaters within Exhibition Hall present films to educate visitors about the operations of the House and the Senate and to encourage civic engagement.

Our tour guide was fabulous! We appreciated her eloquence and humor and honesty.

— PAMELA JURNEY
EDMOND, OKLAHOMA

In the CVC's central gathering space, Emancipation Hall, visitors can view the original plaster model for the Statue of Freedom and study statues from the National Statuary Hall Collection that highlight the diversity of Americans and celebrate the contributions of notable citizens to the nation. Among the 25 statues in the CVC are: John L. "Jack" Swigert Jr., Apollo 13 astronaut and congressman-elect from Colorado; Alabama's Helen Keller; and Utah's Philo T. Farnsworth, the "father of television."



A Visitor Guide talks with visitors about the Heller Keller statue in Emancipation Hall.

Congressional leadership has used Emancipation Hall for numerous special events since the CVC's opening, including bust unveilings and Congressional Gold Medal ceremonies. Recent highlights include the 2016 Gold Medal ceremonies honoring the Foot Soldiers of the 1965 Voting Rights Marches and the 65th Infantry Regiment, the Borinqueneers.

While designed as the visitor's gateway to the historic Capitol, the CVC also offers convenient amenities including the Capitol Cafe, two Gift Shops, and two Information Desks, all of which are managed by a well-trained staff of service professionals who are dedicated to delivering world-class service to the congressional community and the public.

(Our Visitor Guide) was captivating and gave excellent educational information to my 7th and 8th graders. She had them asking questions, kept them laughing, and had them completely engaged. Kudos!

— MR. MICHAEL MILLER,
ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA SCHOOL,
BURLINGAME, CA



On more than half the days of the reporting period, the CVC welcomed more than 10,000 guests.

Record Visitation

The CVC experienced an extraordinary year, setting a new record for visitation. The CVC welcomed 2,473,149 visitors in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. For comparison, the next busiest visitation year was FY 2010 with 200,000 fewer guests. For the fiscal year, visitation was up 12.5 percent over FY 2016. These high visitation figures impacted the Gift Shops and Cafe as well, with both enjoying a record sales year.

In addition, the CVC achieved other visitation milestones this reporting period. The CVC welcomed the 18 millionth visitor April 6, the 19 millionth visitor July 14, and anticipates welcoming the 20 millionth visitor near the New Year.

During the reporting period, April 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017, the CVC had 10.5 percent more visitation than in the same months of 2016. The CVC experienced highest visitation in June with 325,768 visitors. The CVC welcomed nearly 16,000 visitors on June 14, the highest visitation day of the period. During the reporting period, daily visitation exceeded 10,000 guests on 88 out of 129 days.

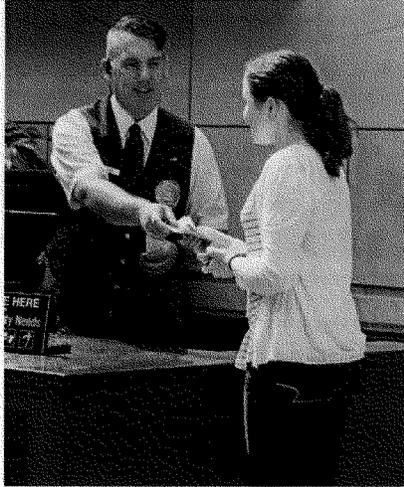
The CVC is proud of the world-class service the team of Visitor Guides and Visitor Assistants provides to all who walk through the doors.

Serving Visitors During Peak Season

To accommodate the increase in visitation, the CVC adjusted the end-of-day photo opportunity, allowing more visitors to experience the Rotunda by increasing the number of passes available from 30 to 100 starting in mid-April. With this increase, an average of 81 visitors a day saw the Rotunda before the building closed and after tours concluded for the day.

In order to better serve congressional offices during the peak visitation period, the CVC implemented a new paging system (enabling congressional staff to check in, provide their cell phone numbers and receive a text when their passes are ready). The CVC added additional work stations at the South Information Desk to accommodate staff walk-ups, and CVC leadership assisted at the staff walk-up area to ensure the new process was implemented as smoothly as possible.

Our tour guide was exceptionally professional and gave one of the best tours we've ever had. She answered questions gracefully, led our group with enthusiasm and was very knowledgeable. Thank you so much for hiring (such) outstanding professionals. It really helped us understand our nation's history in a wonderful way! — ERICA LUDOVINA, COLUMBIA, SC



At an Information Desk in Emancipation Hall, a Visitor Assistant provides tour passes to a visitor.

Tour is offered Monday through Friday at 1 p.m. Limited to 15 visitors, these tours provide a more intimate experience in the Capitol.

The Halls of the Senate Tour visits the beautifully decorated Brumidi Corridors, where Visitor Guides discuss Brumidi's Italian style of art showcasing American themes, animals, flora and fauna. The tour, through the Trophy Room, the Science and Industry Room as well as the connecting corridors, also celebrates the extensive restoration efforts in the area.

On the Freedom Fighters in the Capitol Collection Tour, Visitor Guides discuss four ordinary Americans whose extraordinary actions changed the course of our civil rights history. The tour begins in Emancipation Hall at the bust of Sojourner Truth and then moves to the statue of Frederick Douglass where Visitor Guides present a passage

from Douglass' 1852 speech asking, "What to the American slave is the Fourth of July?" The tour continues to the Old Senate Chamber to learn about abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts before returning to the Philo T. Farnsworth statue in Emancipation Hall to discuss the role of television in sharing the images of the Civil Rights Movement with the broader public.

In May, June, September and October, Visitor Guides led outdoor tours of the Capitol Grounds Monday through Saturday at 1 p.m. The tours are popular with visitors who enjoy learning about the memorial trees, fountains, sculptures and the historical events that continue to take place on these grounds.

Exhibits and Programming

Throughout the reporting period, the CVC offered recurring educational and enriching programs for visitors that tied to the rotating exhibits, heritage months, and significant cultural events or anniversaries.

Family Thursdays typically combined an educational presentation with a hands-on activity, appropriate for adults and for children ages seven and older. Recent topics included the Bill of Rights, the Brumidi Corridors and the Old Senate Chamber.



A Visitor Guide provides information and printed materials to a visiting family.



A Visitor Guide points out elements of the "Apotheosis of Washington" to his tour group of Boy Scouts.

As part of the continuing service to the congressional community, the CVC offers the popular Capitol Tour Training program. In the class, congressional staff, interns and military liaisons learn the tour route, receive information to personalize tours to their state, learn about the art, architecture and history of the Capitol, and receive briefings from the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms and the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services. During the reporting period, 3,292 people attended the 48 classes, an 18 percent increase over this same period last year.

Continuing efforts to provide visitors with the best possible Capitol tour experience, the CVC is in the process of upgrading the headsets used on the tour from analog to digital. Nearly three-fourths of the headsets are now digital with expectations to be fully converted by November 2018, pending funding.

(Our Visitor Guide) was amazing...very engaging, knowledgeable and had a wonderful sense of humor. I enjoyed every minute of it. He really had a great way of making the tour interesting, and it was a major highlight of my visit. He should be commended.

—MARISA AUSTENBERG, RN, CSN,
MENDHAM, NJ

Specialty and Grounds Tours

The CVC focused on specialty tour offerings during this reporting period. In an effort to encourage more participation in the two recurring specialty tours and to provide visitors with a better understanding of their content, the tours were re-named. The Brumidi Tour is now the Halls of the Senate Tour. The Extraordinary Ordinary People Tour is now Freedom Fighters in the Capitol Collection Tour.

The CVC offers the Halls of the Senate Tour twice each day, Monday through Friday, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Freedom Fighters in the Capitol Collection



A Visitor Guide leads a walking tour of the historic Capitol Grounds.



Using a cart about the roles women played during World War II, a Visitor Guide engages a young visitor.

Friday programming included both Seen on Screen and Talking Points. Seen on Screen presented archival film clips in one of the Exhibition Hall theaters followed by questions designed to involve the audience through sharing their own related experiences. Talking Points enabled visitors to join in a conversation with a subject-matter expert about a single exhibition sub-theme or artifact.

The schedule allowed the testing of different program formats, which resulted in information that will influence future programs and exhibits. By gauging visitor response based on program format, time of year and visitor demographics, the CVC will be better able to plan for upcoming changes in Exhibition Hall and future programs designed to increase visitor engagement.

The second installment of “Congress and the World Wars” opened September 12. This exhibit focuses on Congress’s role in shaping the impact of World War I and World War II on both the nation and the world. The exhibit provides visitors with insightful examples of post-war impacts, such as the creation of the international organizations including the League of Nations, the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The exhibit also examines post-war domestic legislation prompted or shaped by each war, such as the 19th Amendment and the Indian Citizenship Act after WWI, and the G.I. Bill of Rights and the National Security Act after WWII. The exhibit closes March 5, 2018.



During September, in recognition of 9/11, Visitor Guides include a tour stop at the Flight 93 Memorial Plaque outside the Rotunda.

Ceremonies

The CVC collaborated with congressional partners to support these special events:

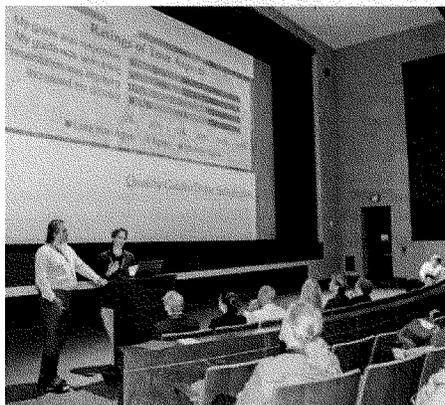
- 4/25/17 Days of Remembrance
- 5/4/17 Memorial Service for Matthew McClanahan
- 5/15/17 Peace Officers Memorial
- 5/25/17 An Afternoon with Cokie Roberts
- 5/27/17 Memorial Day Concert Rehearsal
- 5/28/17 Memorial Day Concert
- 6/3/17 Tennessee Safety Patrol Visit
- 6/3/17 Ford’s Theatre Gala
- 7/3/17 July 4th Concert Rehearsal
- 7/4/17 July 4th Concert
- 9/2/17 Labor Day Concert Rehearsal
- 9/3/17 Labor Day Concert



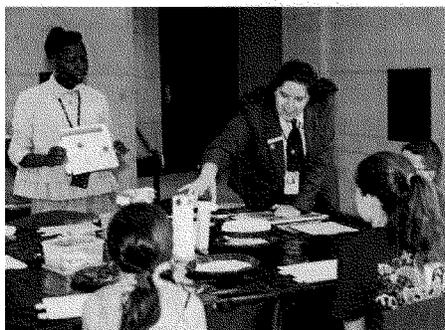
Visitor Guides help visitors in the Rotunda during the Days of Remembrance ceremony.

Smithsonian Visitor Surveys

During the reporting period, the Smithsonian's Office of Policy and Analysis interviewed families in Exhibition Hall about their trip to the Capitol, what they wanted their children to learn from their experience, and how they taught their children at home about the subjects in the Capitol (such as



Staff from the Smithsonian's Office of Policy and Analysis brief CVC staff about recent survey results, which looked at families' expectations.



CVC staff work with young visitors on a craft project during a Family Thursday program.

history, civics and government). Parents expressed a wide range of opinions including:

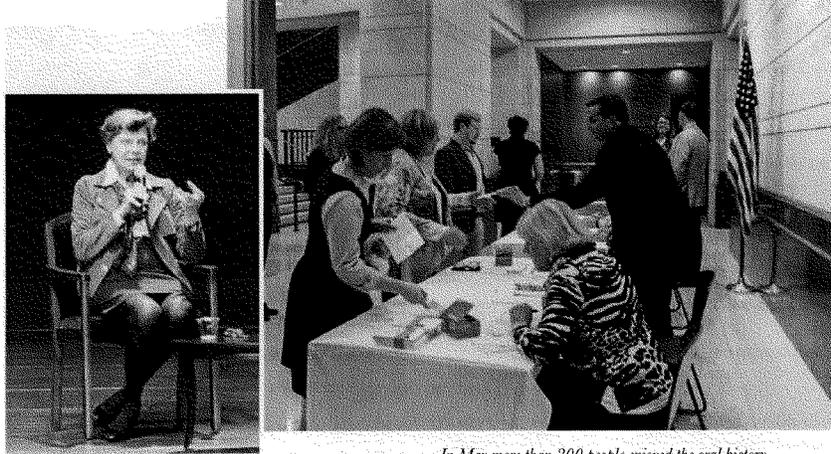
- Wanting their children to learn about the current government, U.S. history, or the history of Congress
- Enhancing their child's experience in school, either by preparing for what they would learn in the next year, or by "making real" lessons from books
- Noting their choice of trip was driven by their child
- Helping to explain to their children what they were seeing in the news
- Inspiring patriotism in their children and teaching them American ideals. These parents saw the visit as part of their children's civic education and identity formation as Americans
- Continued learning for the adults
- Perhaps gauging, or even inspiring, their children's possible interest in government as a career

Visitors were also asked what their children found most engaging, and how they would suggest changing the space to make it better for their children. Such insight into visitors' thinking will guide the CVC in the planning of upcoming programs and the redesign of Exhibition Hall.

Next year's evaluation will focus on Exhibition Hall, the Gift Shops, the Capitol Cafe and feedback for Visitor Services.

(Our Visitor Guide) was so informative and pleasant. Her words came across with much pride and passion for our wonderful country. As she shared her knowledge of the history of the Capitol Building, she created such a beautiful tapestry of valuable memories we will carry on to the future generations of fellow Americans who are proud of our great country.

— DEBRA BAUM
WINTER PARK, FL



In May more than 200 people enjoyed the oral history interview with journalist and author Cokie Roberts in the Congressional Auditorium.

Cokie Roberts Interview

In an effort to explore other types of programs and potential audiences, the CVC is working in partnership with other organizations. In the first such effort, the CVC collaborated with the House Historian and the House of Representatives Office of History, Art and Archives to present “An Afternoon with Cokie Roberts.” On May 25, more than 200 guests enjoyed this Congressional Auditorium program, a live oral history interview, during which Roberts shared her experiences as a journalist, author and daughter of two members of Congress.

Student Programs

Program reservations filled quickly in August for the popular student programs. This year’s student program season will run from October 2017 through February 2018. Student programs will feature the past classes — Art Appreciators, Capitol Art and Environment Matters — but with some slight adjustments

designed to improve program outcomes based on feedback gathered from the last program season. For example, more emphasis on civic education has been incorporated into the art-based programs, and changes to pre-visit materials will re-focus the debate section of the Environment Matters program.



Reservations for this season’s student programs filled quickly. The popular programs begin in October 2017 and run through February 2018.

Exhibition Hall

The redesign of Exhibition Hall continues to move forward as planned. CVC staff finalized the interpretation plan and presented it to partners and stakeholders. The plan provides a “road map” for the next phase of the project, exhibition design.

The CVC collaborated with the Architect of the Capitol to select and then review and refine the statement of work (SOW) for the architect/engineer contract for the project. In late September, the CVC provided the final SOW to the intended contractor.

The redesign, to be developed by the contractor in partnership with an exhibit designer, a multimedia designer and other specialty exhibit consultants, will include a permanent exhibition gallery, a gallery to accommodate rotating exhibits, and an educational mixed-use space.



A CVC staff member puts the finishing touches on a display case for the current exhibit, “Congress and the World Wars.”

Gift Shops, Capitol Cafe and Special Events

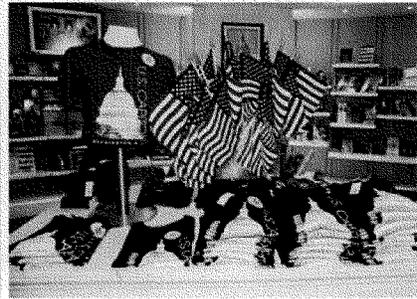
The Gift Shops finished a record-breaking fiscal year with sales up 23.6 percent over FY 2016. For the reporting period, sales were up 20 percent over the same period in FY 2016.

The Gift Shops entered the spring season with a selection of unique items chosen to complement cherry blossom season. During the summer, the Gift Shops featured patriotic displays of red, white and blue merchandise. Each shop featured a dedicated area of seasonal merchandise presentations and

product displays targeted to summer visitors, including scouts and budget-conscious travelers and families.

The Gift Shops team added a presentation of lower-priced commemorative items to the front of each shop throughout the season, which helped to increase sales. Best-selling products were in the commemorative and apparel categories including adult jerseys, T-shirts, water bottles and ornaments.

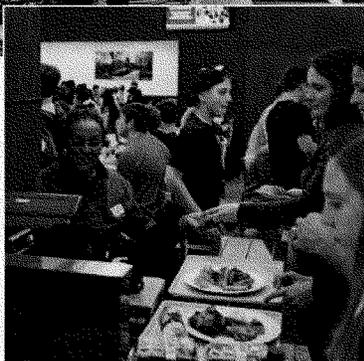
Seasonal Sales Associates joined the team early in the spring season, and their help ensured adequate staffing to assist visitors and to meet operational needs.



Short-sleeved T-shirts in patriotic colors have been popular in the Gift Shops.



Signage explains the connection between the Capitol Cafe's flourless chocolate cake, inspired by ration cookbook recipes, and the current exhibit, "Congress and the World Wars."



Record numbers of spring and summer visitors enjoyed the menu options in the Capitol Cafe.

Small businesses continue to express interest in working with the Gift Shops. The merchandise team looks for ways to provide opportunities for new vendors to have their products offered in the Gift Shops.

The Gift Shops team worked together to encourage visitor awareness of new offerings, seasonal items, discounts, and the exclusivity of the merchandise. In addition, new signs placed at the entrance to both Gift Shops let visitors know that all merchandise is made in the United States. The average transaction continued to grow and can be attributed to increased

product and sales education as well as interaction with the visitors.

With the increased visitation, the Capitol Cafe also enjoyed a record breaking fiscal year with FY 2017 sales up 18.7 percent over FY 2016.

Beginning in the summer months, the Capitol Cafe offered menu items (beef and mushroom meatloaf, war bread and flourless chocolate cake) that were inspired by the current exhibit, "Congress and the World Wars," and the World War II cart that focused on life on the home front. During the world wars, meat and flour were sent to soldiers, making these commodities scarce for families. The Capitol Cafe researched and developed recipes based on the ration cookbooks of the period.

The Capitol Cafe also introduced signage identifying the menu items and linking them to the themes of the exhibit. The CVC Videographer created a video highlighting the connection between the menu and the exhibit, which has reached more than 9,500 people on Facebook thus far.



The Gift Shops stock colorful, made-in-the-USA merchandise, like these paper placemats and red-and-white-striped table runners.

As another part of efforts to connect the Capitol Cafe to the Capitol, the Capitol tour and Exhibition Hall, scenes from the “Frieze of American History” now decorate the Capitol Cafe’s salad bar area. Later in the year, two more photo murals of art from the Capitol will be added.

The effort to improve the signage and décor also included new uniforms for Capitol Cafe staff that featured the new Capitol Cafe logo.



A Visitor Guide describes the “Minnesota” medallion painting to his group on a Halls of the Senate Tour.

As part of the CVC’s continuing commitment to provide outstanding service to Congress, the CVC hosted 393 events during the reporting period.

Strategic and Operation Plan Update

The CVC continues to make progress implementing the goals of its five-year Strategic and Operations Plan. As the second year of the plan comes to a close, the CVC has made great strides toward fulfilling its mission of working together for Congress to inform, involve and inspire every visitor to the Capitol.

Highlights include:

- Providing world-class customer service at many significant ceremonies, including the 58th Presidential Inauguration

(Our) Visitor Guide’s high-energy enthusiasm, quick wit, vast knowledge of her subject, and humor was the highlight of my very wonderful day. Many thanks to her and to the fine job all of your people did to accommodate the massive crowds.

— BEN FERGUSON
EYETTEVILLE, GEORGIA

- Re-designing the Information Desks in Emancipation Hall, making them more user-friendly for visitors
- Creating engaging digital signage to inform visitors of programming
- Implementing a paging system to inform congressional staff when tour passes are ready for their constituents



At an Information Desk in Emancipation Hall, a Visitor Assistant helps a visitor with tour passes. (left) A Volunteer talks to young visitors about items on the WWII cart. (right)

- Supporting congressional offices by updating and sending each office the extensive “Guide to Visitor Services for Congressional Staff,” providing information on tours, programs, meeting spaces, CVC amenities for visitors and more
- Engaging visitors in meaningful experiences that impart a greater understanding of our democratic process, such as the May 25 program, “An Afternoon With Cokie Roberts,” a first for the CVC
- Leading the project team responsible for ensuring the Dome Tour route and staff were ready to provide an inspiring and informative experience to visitors



A Visitor Guide talks with visitors in Emancipation Hall.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, the CVC expects to continue optimizing the capacity and productivity of people, systems and processes to achieve high performance on all levels. For example, the CVC will:

- Move forward with the Exhibition Hall redesign project to create a space that is welcoming and engaging for visitors. The new exhibits will explain the significance of Congress to everyday life, the role of citizens in a democratic process and the evolving understanding of “We the People”
- Reimagine the Capitol Tour to meet the needs of the predominant visitor demographics by season. The first thematic tour will target the thousands of middle school students who visit the

Capitol in March through June. Based on national curriculum standards on civic education, the tour will invite visitors to explore the meaning of self-government, witness the impact of Congress on daily life, and consider what moments in the Capitol’s history resonate with their sense of values and citizenship. The tour is scheduled to be launched in March 2019



A Visitor Assistant directs visitors entering the CVC.

(Our) Visitor Guide proved to be one of a kind. She was as knowledgeable as I can imagine possible. She delivered the whole tour in the most pleasant, often very funny manner, while exhibiting much respect to the building and the values it represents. Our students gained both information and understanding and an experience they will not forget for a long time. What a great service (she) does to your important institution and her country.

— PROFESSOR ROY PELED, STRIKS SCHOOL OF LAW, COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT, ISRAEL



A Visitor Guide shares the beauty of the Brumidi Corridors during a Halls of the Senate Tour.

- Prepare for the upcoming exhibit “Congress and the Separation of Powers,” which will open in March 2018. The exhibit will focus on Congress’s interactions with the executive and judicial branches, focusing on the checks and balances inherent in the Constitution. Featured topics will include: Congress’s rejection of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Court-packing plan, the Senate’s rejections of Presidents Andrew Jackson and Dwight D. Eisenhower’s nominees, the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles, the First and Second War Powers Act (providing additional power to the presidency during World War II), the 22nd Amendment, Congress’s involvement in deciding the presidential election in 1877, the impeachment of Richard Nixon, Fulbright hearings, and the Joint Committee on Reconstruction
- Pilot additional program models, looking for new ways to engage visitors and find innovative ways to include civic education in on-site programs and in an interactive way on the CVC website
- Welcome the 20 millionth visitor
- Provide comprehensive visitor access to Wi-Fi
- Add new products and small-business vendors to our made-in-the-USA Gift Shops’ inventory to prepare for the holiday season, part of continuing efforts to keep the Gift Shops looking fresh and interesting

As the CVC approaches its 10-year anniversary in 2018, it will continue building on accomplishments and initiatives included in this report. Through these efforts, combined with a wide variety of internal training initiatives, hiring process improvements, and a continually strengthening employee-driven customer service philosophy, the CVC will continue to deliver world-class service to Congress and to visitors. ■



The CVC looks forward to celebrating its 10-year anniversary in December 2018

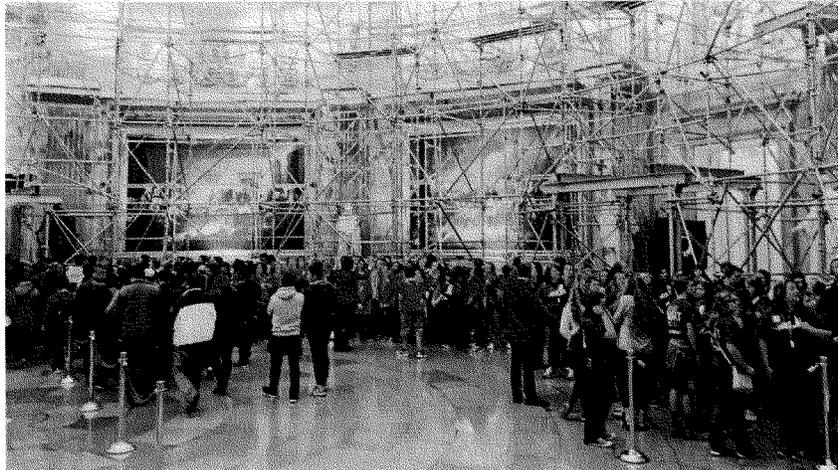
Operations Summary (October 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016)

The CVC's Emancipation Hall served as the setting for a number of significant events. Two of these events involved the President and Vice President of the United States, and a former President and Vice President. Two Congressional Gold Medal ceremonies and a congressional commemorative ceremony were also held in Emancipation Hall. The CVC's Visitor Services Division (VSD) staff provided wayfinding and other logistical support during these events. These events are listed in the Visitor Services Division section of this report on page 6.

Continuation of the Rotunda phase of the Dome Restoration Project impacted operations at the CVC during the reporting period. The reduction in floor space in the Rotunda that resulted from the installation of scaffolding, coupled with the busiest season of the year due to the Easter break, spring break, and Cherry Blossom Festival, produced additional challenges. Prior to this reporting period, the CVC began to prepare for these challenges by making adjustments to operating hours and developing alternate tour times (see page 7 for more details).

Also in anticipation of the busy spring season, work began late in 2015 to replace the CVC north and south entrance doors. The significant weight of the original doors made them unwieldy for visitors to open and also caused the automatic door-opening mechanisms to break frequently. Close collaboration between the CVC, the Capitol Superintendent's Office, U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) and the Fire Marshal's office resulted in completion of the project in time to welcome the large numbers of spring visitors. While the project was underway, the CVC worked with the USCP to create a temporary exit through the Library of Congress tunnel to ensure adequate exits were available as the work alternated between the north and south entrances.

The CVC continued to use the staffing model that it has developed over the past several years of hiring temporary staff to help manage the spring/summer influx of visitors. The CVC hired 45 temporary full-time Visitor Assistants and four temporary Gift Shops Sales Associates. Six internal candidates were hired as temporary Visitor Guides for the peak season.



Despite a constrained floor space in the Rotunda due to scaffolding, Visitor Guides effectively managed tour groups through that space during the first spike in visitation in mid-March.



A Visitor Assistant greets a visitor near the South Orientation Theater.

Developing educational opportunities for school groups and teachers remained a top priority of the Exhibits and Education Division (EED). By the end of the September 2015 – February 2016 Student Program Season, 38 student groups with a total of 1,952 students had participated in the programs. Among the popular programs was an art appreciation program for third graders that was developed jointly by the EED staff and the Library of Congress. The EED also created a new guide — *A Capitol Adventure* — to help educate very young visitors about the Capitol. The guide was released during the reporting period for children kindergarten through second grade.



A Visitor Guide engages visitors in National Statuary Hall.

In March, the EED staff opened its 14th rotation of documents and artifacts: “Congress and the Progressive Era.” Staff from the Communications and Marketing Division collaborated with the EED staff to develop postcards and banners to capture the attention of visitors and encourage them to visit Exhibition Hall.

On the safety front, CVC staff demonstrated their dedication to assisting visitors as they supported the U.S. Capitol Police during a shooting incident at the north entrance screening zone on March 28. Staff in various CVC divisions helped guide visitors to shelter-in-place locations and fostered calmness amid anxious visitors. All CVC staff had been provided with “Active Shooter Training” just weeks prior to this incident.

Within the organization, CVC managers continued to work to improve the internal culture at the CVC in order to cultivate a more affirmative, rewarding and cohesive work environment. A very lively and successful teambuilding event was coordinated by the training office during the afternoon that the CVC was closed for preparations for the State of the Union Address. On hand were 150 staff who were divided into teams who built 24 children’s bikes that were later donated to charity. Additionally, many staff participated in training opportunities offered during the reporting period

that ranged from leadership training to techniques of customer service for Gift Shops staff.

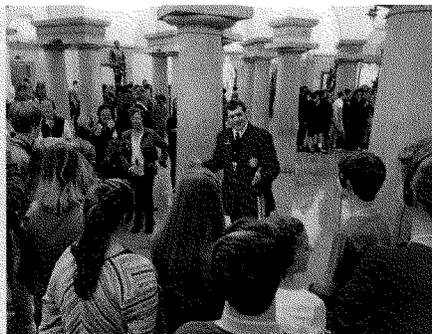
A newly-released Rotunda app, developed by the Communications and Marketing Division, was highlighted by Mr. Ayers during the Architect's Forum (a series of Town Hall meetings). The app allows users to explore 360-degree views, panoramic images of the Rotunda and learn about the historical facets of the U.S. Capitol Rotunda in an interactive platform. The creative development team also was honored with a prestigious industry award in the public service category for "Most Engaging Citizen-Facing Campaign."

The CVC continues to enhance its service to the congressional community through its popular Capitol Tour Training program. CVC partners who provide presentations at each session include the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms and the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services. During the reporting period, nearly 1,700 congressional staff were trained in 25 training sessions.

During this reporting period, the CVC Gift Shops introduced new procedures that were key in driving sales. Among the new practices was implementation of a zone duty map for sales associates and improving daily inventory delivery systems (see page 14 for more details). The shops were stocked with new



The CVC provides more than 40,000 tours each year.



A Visitor Guide shares some Capitol history with a tour group in the Crypt.

cherry-blossom-themed merchandise in time for the spring season, which boosted sales.

In the CVC Restaurant, sales in March 2016 were the highest for that month since the CVC opened in 2008. The Capitol Superintendent's Office completed renovations to the two meeting rooms that are adjacent to the Restaurant's central dining room. At the same time, the CVC's Planning, Operations and Evaluation Division oversaw IT enhancements in the meeting rooms to increase their functionality and to better meet the requirements of the congressional community.

In the area of training, 55 operations staff participated in the Speed of Trust Foundations Workshop in December. This program, created by FranklinCovey and delivered by an experienced Covey trainer, helps organizations create a high-trust culture of collaboration and engagement.

Further details about these and many other CVC accomplishments and ongoing initiatives during the reporting period are provided in the following narratives, which describe the key activities of each CVC operational division.



*A Visitor Guide delivers a new program called *Extraordinary Ordinary People: Freedom Fighters in the Capitol Collections*. During the Rotunda closure, the special program provided visitors an opportunity to see the Old Senate Chamber.*

Operations Summary (April 1, 2015 – September 30, 2015)

The CVC will celebrate its seven-year anniversary on December 2, 2015. Since its opening in December 2008, the CVC has welcomed more than 15 million visitors; provided 280,000 tours; accommodated close to 6,000 events and meetings; served more than 1.4 million customers in the Restaurant; completed more than 1.6 million sales transactions in the Gift Shops, and engaged close to 5 million visitors in Exhibition Hall. While CVC employees explore ways to build on the success of the first seven years of operation, they will continue to serve Congress, provide exceptional tours, and offer educational opportunities that highlight the history of Congress and the Capitol.

During the reporting period, CVC staff assisted with a number of notable events in the Capitol that necessitated changes in the daily tour schedule. While the CVC's Visitor Services Division (VSD) staff provided wayfinding and other logistical support during special events, the Communications and Marketing Division (CMD) staff and reservations coordinators notified the public and reservation-holders regarding tour times and other operational

changes. These events are listed in the Visitor Services Division section of this report on page 6.

In collaboration with congressional leadership, the Capitol Superintendent's office, and other congressional partners, VSD staff developed a way to provide tours to visitors on days when special afternoon events are planned for Emancipation Hall. In the past, tours in the Capitol were suspended on days when events were scheduled in the CVC. However, new routes to process visitors through the CVC allow AOC staff to complete event set-ups while CVC staff manage the flow of visitors around the set-up area. This provides more visitors with opportunities to see the Capitol.

Two major events at the Capitol dominated operations at the CVC during the reporting period — the closure of the Rotunda in July for the installation of scaffolding and, in September, the address by the Pope to a Joint Meeting of Congress.

Modified operations were necessitated by the closure of the Rotunda from Saturday, July 25, until Tuesday, September 8. Using best practices from the Rotunda



A Visitor Guide talks to visitors in Emancipation Hall about Frederick Douglass as part of a new educational program called Extraordinary Ordinary People: Freedom Fighters in the Capitol Collections.

closure in April 2014 as a guide, CVC staff from across divisions collaborated to develop logistics around tour modifications and special activities.

The second major event involved the visit of Pope Francis, who addressed a Joint Meeting of Congress on Thursday, September 24. In preparation for the event, the CVC was closed all day on Wednesday, September 23, and tours of the Capitol were suspended. On September 24, more than 100 CVC staff provided assistance with wayfinding while the special events and audio-visual teams assisted with the ticket distribution for congressional offices and the Archdioceses and the broadcast of the Joint Meeting in the Congressional Auditorium for VIP guests.

Within the organization, CVC managers continued to work to improve the internal culture at the CVC in order to cultivate a more affirmative, rewarding and cohesive work environment. Suggestions to improve the work environment and to enhance assistance to visitors flowed through the CEO's monthly feedback sessions, internal surveys, focus groups and daily exchanges among staff and supervisors. Additionally, many staff actively participate in one of five multi-disciplinary staff-led goal teams, small group (POD) meetings, and cross-divisional working groups. Staff

participating in these collective efforts have worked diligently with CVC management to develop and refine recommendations and bring them to fruition.

The Partner Collaboration Goal Team is leading the CVC in rolling out an internal culture improvement initiative entitled ONE – E Pluribus.



A Visitor Guide provides wayfinding to visitors and congressional staff during the Rotunda closure.

ONE articulates the CVC staff's collective vision for a thriving, energized and engaged workforce. ONE also celebrates the strength of the CVC's diverse workforce while it builds a cohesive culture. The ONE promotional materials include a question: "What can I do today to help us become ONE?"

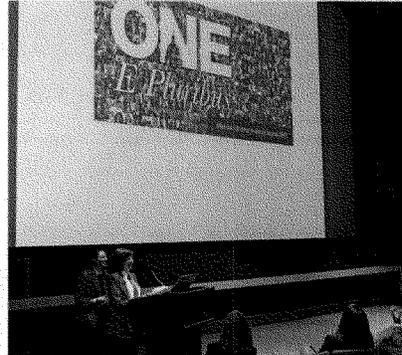
In early September, a representative group of 41 CVC employees gathered to collaborate and provide input to the development of the CVC's new Strategic and Operations Plan. The participants exhibited a positive energy throughout a full-day brainstorming session and offered many innovative and creative ideas for consideration by CVC management.

Using a brief questionnaire about CVC operations and goals, CVC management also solicited input and guidance for the plan from its congressional partners. The feedback received was compiled into a *Stakeholder Input Report*. The comments from CVC partners about its operations were positive and constructive. All those who responded expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the CVC's strategic planning effort.

The review and vetting process for the Strategic and Operations Plan will continue through the fall of 2015 with a roll-out of the new plan expected early in 2016.

Collaboration and communication among divisions is critical to the success of the CVC. In September, the Exhibits and Education Division staff opened its thirteenth selection of documents and artifacts: Part two of "Congress Investigates." Staff from the Communications and Marketing Division collaborated with the Exhibits and Education Division staff to develop a new concept for marketing the exhibit using provocative questions on postcards and banners to entice visitors into Exhibition Hall to learn the answers to the questions.

In the area of social media, the CVC is proud to have been awarded a "Bravo" badge from the TripAdvisor website. The award is the result of the CVC being rated an "excellent" site to visit by more than 1,200 travelers. TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel site, offering advice from travelers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features. TripAdvisor-branded sites make up the largest travel community in the world, reaching 315 million unique monthly visitors.



In spring 2015, CVC employees introduced a new internal culture improvement initiative called ONE – E Pluribus. The ONE initiative articulates the collective vision of CVC employees for a collaborative and engaged workforce.

The CVC continues to enhance its service to the congressional community through its popular Capitol Tour Training program. CVC partners who provide presentations at each session include the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms and the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services. During the reporting period, close to 3,000 congressional staff participated in the half-day program.

During this reporting period, the CVC Gift Shops implemented an organizational transition which resulted in the realignment of duties to improve efficiencies and meet operational needs. Planning, Operations and Evaluation staff assisted the Gift Shops in hiring an Operations Manager, an Assistant Operations Manager, and two Merchandise Assistants for the Gift Shops.

On April 10, 2015, the CVC Restaurant experienced its highest sales day since the CVC opened with gross sales of \$30,894. For the month of April 2015 the volume and sales increased approximately 2.3 percent and 4.1 percent, respectively (transactions 34,679 to 35,460 and sales \$531,138 to \$553,138) compared with April 2014.

Further details about these and many other CVC accomplishments and ongoing initiatives during the reporting period are provided in the following narratives, which describe activities in each division.



In March 2014, Capitol Visitor Center staff began using a new and more effective advance reservation system.

Operations Summary (October 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015)

The CVC celebrated its six-year anniversary on December 2, 2014. Since its opening in December 2008, the CVC has welcomed close to 14 million visitors; provided 260,000 tours; accommodated more than 5,000 events and meetings; served more than 1.2 million customers in the Restaurant; completed more than 1.4 million sales transactions in the Gift Shops; and engaged more than four million visitors in Exhibition Hall. While CVC employees explore ways to build on the success of the first six years of operation, they will continue to serve Congress, provide exceptional tours, and offer educational opportunities that highlight the history of Congress and the Capitol.

During the reporting period, CVC staff assisted with a number of special events in the Capitol that necessitated changes in the daily tour schedule. While the CVC's Visitor Services Division (VSD) staff provided wayfinding and other logistical support during events, the Communications and Marketing Division (CMD) staff and Reservations Coordinators notified the public and reservation-holders regarding tour times and other operational changes. Included among these events were: the Gold Medal ceremony for the Civil Air Patrol (December 10); the State of the Union address (January 20); the Gold Medal ceremony for the First Special Services Force (February 3); the unveiling of the statue of Barry Goldwater (February 11); Joint Meetings of Congress (March 3 and March 25); and the Gold Medal ceremony for Jack Nicklaus (March 24).

In collaboration with congressional leadership and the Capitol Superintendent's office, VSD staff began working on ways to provide tours to visitors on days when special afternoon events are planned to occur in Emancipation Hall. In the past, tours in the Capitol could not occur on days when events were scheduled in the CVC. However, new routes to process visitors through the CVC will allow AOC staff to complete event set-ups while CVC staff manage the flow of visitors around the set-up area and provide more visitors the opportunity to see the Capitol.



When areas of the Capitol are closed due to special events, Visitor Guides provide visitors enriching experiences in Emancipation Hall.



Visitor Guides distribute headsets to visitors as they exit an Orientation Theater.

CVC managers continued to work to improve the internal culture at the CVC in order to cultivate a more affirmative, rewarding and cohesive work environment. Suggestions to improve the work environment and to enhance assistance to visitors flowed through the CEO's monthly feedback sessions, internal surveys, focus groups and daily exchanges among staff and supervisors. Many staff actively participate in one of five multi-disciplinary staff-led goal teams, small group meetings and cross-divisional working groups. Staff participating in these collective efforts have worked diligently with CVC management to develop and refine recommendations and bring them to fruition.

The CVC's five goal teams focus on internal issues such as organizational flexibility, innovation, communication, teamwork and strategic improvements. The reorganization and expansion of the goal team structure in 2014 resulted in nearly 60 employees serving on the teams. Directors serve as advisors, and each team is led by two co-leaders selected from operations and supervisory staff. The teams meet bi-weekly and work on ongoing initiatives with a consideration of themes tied to the CVC's aspirational culture. Initiatives emerging from the goal teams include an employee-led and active social committee; peer-nominated bi-monthly Employee of Excellence awards; enhanced offerings

for non-English-speaking visitors; a robust schedule of lunch-time speakers including peers and special guests; additional in-house and external training opportunities; and an employee-written internal newsletter, *Skylights*.

Collaboration and communication among divisions is critical to the success of the CVC. The CVC's new advance reservation system for tours and congressionally-sponsored special events in the CVC launched in mid-March. Several CVC divisions, including the Visitor Services Division, the Restaurants and Special Events Division and the Planning, Operations and Evaluation Division, collaborated to ensure the smooth transition from the prior system. Communications and Marketing Division staff informed the congressional community about the new system by holding a special Information Exchange, providing a Webinar, and sending follow-up email with a link for online practice opportunities.

Using best practices from last April as a guide, CVC staff from across divisions are currently collaborating to determine the modified operations that will be necessitated by the Rotunda closure that will begin in late July and continue until early September. Employee-driven working groups are providing input into logistics around tour modifications and special activities.

Operations ran smoothly throughout the rest of the reporting period. In March, the Exhibits and Education Division staff opened its twelfth selection of documents and artifacts: Part One of “Congress Investigates.” Accompanying banners, posters, brochures and an article in *Roll Call* generated significant interest in the congressional community about the new exhibit that included documents and artifacts loaned by the Library of Congress and the National Archives.

The CVC continues to enhance its service to the congressional community through its popular Capitol Tour Training program. CVC partners who provide presentations at each session include the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms and the Office of Congressional Accessibility. During the reporting period, more than 1,100 congressional staff participated in the half-day program.

During this reporting period, the CVC Gift Shops implemented improvements to update and document current operating procedures and inventory including “back of house” operations. These improvements will maximize the capabilities of the point-of-sale system resulting in increased accuracy of inventory and stock levels to support growing sales. The improvements also included

an updated staffing plan, which was implemented within the salary parameters and full-time-employee requirements for the Gifts Shops.

The VSD made operational improvements on several fronts. New shuttles arrived in January. The visual, structural and safety enhancements of the new shuttles will help make this operation a safer and more pleasant experience for visitors who need mobility assistance from the bus drop-off area on the West Front of the Capitol to the CVC. New stanchions for the CVC interior spaces arrived in December 2014. The improved functionality of the retracting mechanisms of the new stanchions make them easier for staff to maintain. Near the end of the reporting period, additional stanchions were ordered to help manage visitor flow outside of the CVC.

The CVC Restaurant enjoyed robust sales with the coming of the peak season crowds in mid-March. Most notably, on March 30, the Restaurant experienced its highest sales day since the CVC opened.

Further details about these and many other CVC accomplishments and ongoing initiatives during the reporting period are provided in the following narratives, which describe key activities in each CVC division.



A Visitor Guide shares the rich history of National Statuary Hall with one of the 40,000 tour groups that pass through the Capitol each year.

Operations Summary (April 1, 2014 - September 30, 2014)

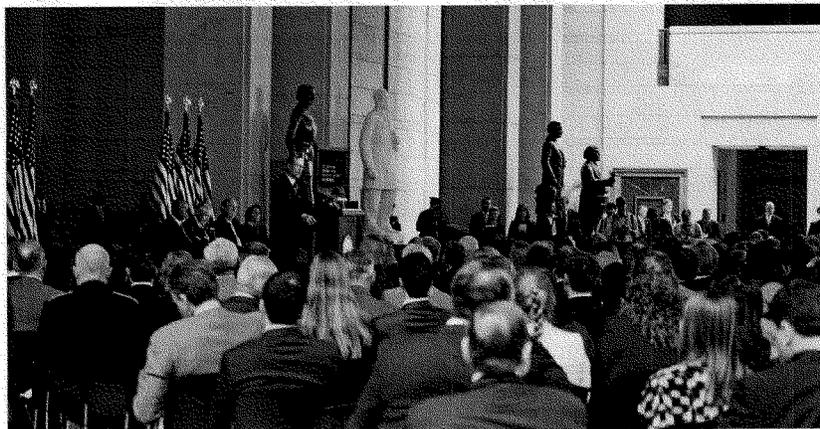
This reporting period began with the closure of the Rotunda from April 12 through April 28, which significantly altered tours of the U.S. Capitol and changed many of the routine operations at the Capitol Visitor Center (CVC). CVC staff from all divisions worked together to minimize the impact to visitors and congressional staff and ensure that visiting the Capitol during this period was an enjoyable, informative and memorable experience.

The CVC will celebrate its six-year anniversary on December 2, 2014. Since its opening in December 2008, the CVC has welcomed close to 13 million visitors; provided 240,000 tours; accommodated 5,000 events and meetings; served more than 1.4 million customers in the Restaurant; completed more than a million sales transactions in the Gift Shops; and engaged nearly 3.6 million visitors in Exhibition Hall.

In May, the CVC received notice from one of the Web's top travel and tourism review sites, TripAdvisor, that it was a 2014 winner of a Certificate of Excellence. According to the certificate, the CVC "has consistently earned outstanding feedback from TripAdvisor travelers."

While we explore ways to build on the success of the first six years of operation, CVC employees will continue to serve Congress, provide exceptional tours, and offer educational opportunities that highlight the history of Congress and the Capitol.

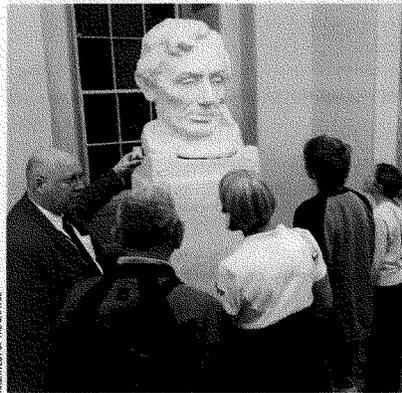
During the reporting period, CVC staff assisted with a number of high-profile events in the Capitol which necessitated changes in the daily tour schedule. While the CVC's Visitor Services Division (VSD) staff provided wayfinding and other logistical support during special events, the Communications and Marketing Division (CMD) staff and reservations coordinators notified the public and reservation-holders regarding tour time changes and other operational changes. These events included: the annual Days of Remembrance ceremony (April 30); the Gold Medal ceremony for Dr. and Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act (June 24); the Gold Medal ceremony for Shimon Peres (June 26); the July 4 concert on the West Front; the Gold Medal ceremony for Raoul Wallenberg (July 9); the Gold Medal ceremony for victims of September 11 and first responders (September 10); and a Joint Meeting of Congress (September 18).



On September 10, the Capitol Visitor Center hosted the Gold Medal ceremony for victims of September 11 and first responders.

CVC managers continued to work to improve the internal culture at the CVC in order to cultivate a more affirmative, rewarding and cohesive work environment. Suggestions to improve the work environment and to enhance assistance to visitors have come through the Architect of the Capitol's (AOC) Organizational Assessment Survey, the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) monthly feedback sessions, internal surveys, focus groups and daily exchanges among staff and supervisors. Additionally, CVC staff at all levels have been given the opportunity to participate in decision-making. For example, many staff actively participate in one of five multi-disciplinary staff-led goal teams, small group (POD) meetings and cross-divisional working groups. Staff participating in these collective efforts have worked diligently with CVC management to develop and refine recommendations and bring them to fruition.

The CVC's five goal teams focus on internal issues such as organization flexibility, innovation, communication, teamwork and strategic improvements. The reorganization and expansion of the goal team structure in 2014 resulted in nearly 60 employees volunteering to serve on the restructured teams. In the previous goal team structure, division directors served as team leads. In the new structure, directors serve as advisors, and each team is led by two co-leaders selected from operations and supervisory staff. The teams



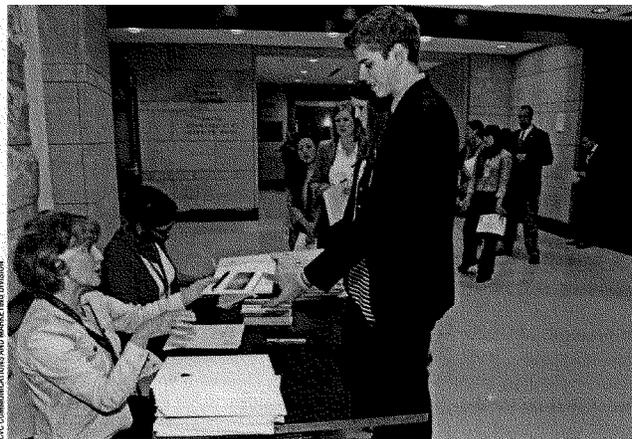
During the Rotunda closure, Visitor Guides were positioned in the Crypt of the Capitol to provide interpretation at key locations.

meet biweekly and work on ongoing initiatives with a consideration of themes tied to the CVC's aspirational culture. Initiatives emerging from the goal teams include an employee-led and active social committee; peer-nominated bi-monthly Employee of Excellence awards; enhanced offerings for non-English-speaking visitors; a robust schedule of lunch-time speakers including peers and special guests; additional in-house and external training opportunities; and an employee-written internal newsletter, *Skylights*.

On September 8, the CVC welcomed its new Deputy CEO, Nik Apostolides, who most recently served as Associate Director at the National Portrait Gallery. In that position, on an annual basis, he oversaw visitor services for more than 1.1 million visitors and new media and publications for more than 4 million online visitors. He also provided oversight of the 22,000-object collection, exhibition design and production, external affairs, and collections information and research. Additionally, Mr. Apostolides supervised administration and operations, including building operations, budget and finance, food service, the museum shop, Information Technology (IT), human resources and security.

Collaboration and communication among divisions is critical to the success of the CVC. For example, staff from across divisions collaborated to carry out the modified operations necessitated by the Rotunda closure in April. Employee-driven working groups provided input into logistics around tour modifications and special activities. Due to their hard work, operations ran smoothly, and visitors were provided with a variety of options to enrich their visits to the Capitol. The CMD focused its efforts on notifying the public and the congressional community about the closure. A comprehensive, informational meeting organized by the CVC was attended by approximately 300 congressional staff.

Operations ran smoothly throughout the rest of the reporting period. In September, the Exhibits and Education Division (EED) staff opened its 11th selection of documents and artifacts: part two of "Congress and the War of 1812." To generate awareness of the new documents, the CMD created an accompanying brochure, posters and an online exhibit.



Volunteers assisted with the CVC's Congressional Tour Training program by checking-in Congressional staff.

Throughout the reporting period, the EED worked with museum consultants and held several workshops with CVC staff and stakeholders to plan for the future of Exhibition Hall. Discussions centered on goals for visitor education and engagement in Exhibition Hall and research into visitor behavior and expectations.

In the fall, the EED collaborated with the U.S. Botanic Garden and the National Gallery of Art to present "Walking with Wheat: A journey through history, botany, and culture." The program, which was offered to the public several times, began at the Capitol with a discussion of Dr. Norman Borlaug, the plant scientist who was recently honored by Iowa with a state statue in the National Statuary Hall Collection.

The CVC released its third mobile app, My Capitol, which is a young person's guide to Exhibition Hall and the Capitol Grounds.

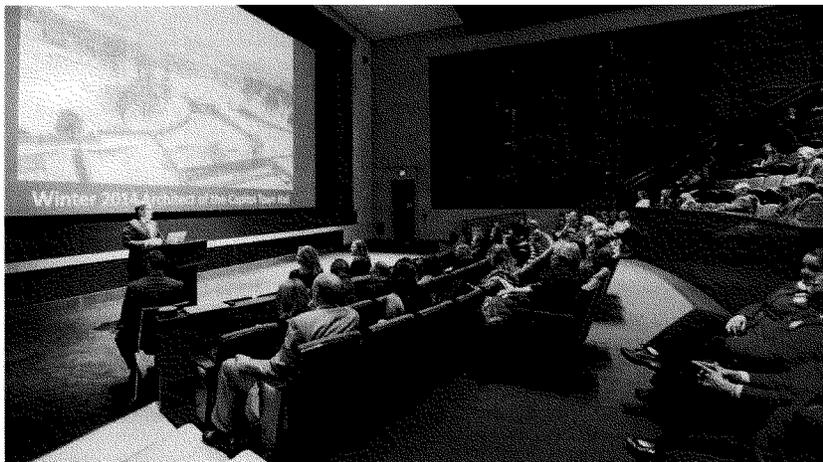
The CVC continues to enhance its service to the congressional community. During the month of June, the CVC provided tour training for 1,102 congressional staff. This is the largest number of staff trained in a single month since the CVC opened in 2008. CVC partners who provide presentations at each session include the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms and the Office of Congressional Accessibility. The training continues throughout the year except during the August congressional district work period.

During this reporting period, the CVC Gift Shops worked to review, document and update current operating procedures. The team, including all levels of staff and management, conducted an in-depth analysis to fully understand and document the current operating structure and procedures. The team also identified recommendations for changes to the processes that would improve merchandise levels, service and efficiencies.

The next phase of the process will focus on improvements to the warehouse and merchandise replenishment processes. Improvements to these key operational areas would have the greatest positive impact on the business by improving inventory accuracy at the point-of-sale and ensuring appropriate stock levels.

The Visitor Services Division (VSD) made operational improvements on several fronts. In September, a new shuttle vendor was chosen, and the new shuttles are expected to arrive in January 2015. Additionally, the CVC's assisted listening device system will be upgraded. And, new stanchions will arrive in December that will be easier for staff to maneuver and maintain.

Further details about these and many other CVC accomplishments during the reporting period are provided in the individual CVC division narratives that follow.



Architect of the Capitol Stephen T. Ayers met with the entire CVC staff to update them on the Dome Restoration Project and other issues.

Operations Summary (October 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014)

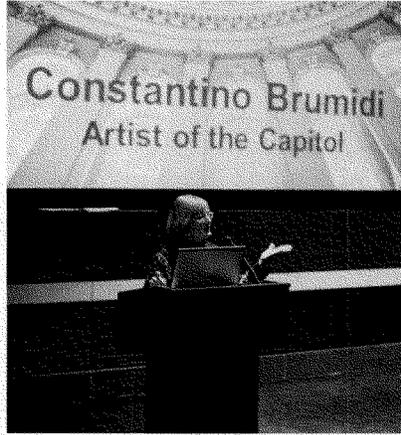
This reporting period began with the shutdown of the federal government from October 1 through October 16, which significantly disrupted the operations of the Capitol Visitor Center (CVC). Throughout the shutdown, the CVC was closed, and there were no tours of the Capitol. Some staff worked to inform visitors and other customers on a daily basis regarding the status of operations. Once the shutdown ended, the CVC informed the public and the congressional community the CVC had reopened and the tour process had resumed.

The CVC celebrated its five-year anniversary on December 2, 2013. Since the time of its opening in December 2008, the CVC has welcomed more than 11 million visitors; provided 220,000 tours; accommodated 4,400 events and meetings; served more than 1.3 million customers in the Restaurant; completed 890,000 sales transactions in the Gift Shops; and engaged 3 million visitors in Exhibition Hall. While they seek to explore ways to build on the success of their first five years of operation, the CVC staff will continue to go the extra mile

to provide exceptional tours and educational opportunities that highlight the history of Congress and the Capitol.

During the reporting period, CVC staff assisted with a number of high-profile events in the Capitol which necessitated changes in the daily tour schedule. While the CVC's Visitor Services Division staff provided wayfinding and other logistical support, the Communications and Marketing Division staff and reservations coordinators notified the public and reservation-holders regarding tour time changes. These events included: a celebration of the life of Speaker of the House Thomas S. Foley on October 29, 2013; the unveiling of the bust of Winston Churchill on October 30, 2103; a Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony for Native American Code Talkers on November 20, 2013; President Obama's State of the Union address on January 28, 2014; the Friends of Ireland Luncheon on March 14, 2014 and the unveiling of the statue of Dr. Norman Borlaug on March 25, 2014.

CVC managers continue to build on efforts to



ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

AOC Curator Barbara Wolanin conducted a session on "Artist of the Capitol" Constantino Brumidi for staff during the CVC's first "State of the Union" Conference.

improve the internal culture at the CVC with the goal of creating a more positive, fulfilling and cohesive work environment. CVC staff at all levels have played a role in this effort. Many ideas and recommendations to improve the work environment



ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

In March 2014, the CVC recognized Visitor Guide Barbara Rahlh as Employee of the Year. Barbara excels at engaging students of all ages and consistently demonstrates the highest level of professionalism and courtesy.

and service to visitors have come through monthly feedback sessions, internal surveys, focus groups and in daily exchanges between staff and supervisors. CVC staff have actively participated in goal teams, small group meetings, working groups and other collective efforts to turn those ideas and recommendations into reality.

Collaboration and communication among divisions is critical to the success of the organization. Staff from the Visitor Services Division and the Exhibits and Education Division (EED) have collaborated to develop a new War of 1812 tour to complement a new rotation of documents entitled "Congress and the War of 1812" in Exhibition Hall. Additionally, staff from the two divisions along with the Training Office worked to implement and expand Exhibition Hall "encounters" with the cart program and the hooks and artifacts program, and to incorporate new middle school civics curriculum into the standard Capitol tour.

Employee-driven working groups also provided critical input into logistics around tour modifications and special activities necessitated by the Rotunda closure in April and the scheduling of Visitor Guides and Visitor Assistants.

During the CVC's early closure prior to President Obama's State of the Union address in January, staff assisted in organizing the CVC's first "State of the Union Conference" with peer-conducted workshops and meetings. Staff were given the opportunity to attend two of four concurrent sessions. Three sessions were conducted by front-line staff on topics that included: Tecumseh and the War of 1812, the Recruitment of African-Americans during the Civil War, and the Creation of the Antietam Battlefield Atlas. After-event evaluations confirmed that the Conference was a resounding success that will become an annual occurrence.

The CVC has five multi-disciplinary goal teams that focus on internal issues such as organization flexibility, innovation, communication, teamwork and strategic improvements. The reorganization and expansion of this goal team structure resulted in nearly 60 employees volunteering to serve on the restructured teams. In the previous goal team

structure, division directors served as team leads. In the new structure, directors serve as advisors, and each team is led by two co-leaders selected from operations and supervisory staff. The teams meet bi-weekly and work on new or ongoing initiatives with a consideration of themes tied to the CVC's aspirational culture. Initiatives emerging from the goal teams include an employee-led and active social committee; peer-nominated bi-monthly Employee of Excellence awards; enhanced offerings for non-English speaking visitors; a robust schedule of lunch-time speakers including peers and special guests and an employee-written newsletter, *Skylights*.

In conjunction with the opening of its 10th selection of documents in March entitled "Congress and the War of 1812," the EED staff unveiled a dramatic new graphic look for the cases holding these original documents that are on loan from the Library of Congress and the National Archives. The new document cases provide backdrops with visually engaging environments that help visitors better understand the historic context of the documents.

In January, the EED began a formal process of evaluating the effectiveness of Exhibition Hall, the orientation film and related areas. The staff has hosted two workshops for CVC staff and exhibit partners from the Smithsonian, National Archives and the Library

of Congress. Findings from these and subsequent meetings and related activities will help guide EED as the division plans potential upgrades to Exhibition Hall and the orientation film in conjunction with the 10-year anniversary of the CVC.

In January, the CVC's Communications and Marketing Division (CMD) released the U.S. Capitol's first App, a guide to state statues in the U.S. Capitol's National Statuary Hall Collection. The App allows users to access information about their state statues quickly and easily from their iPhone or iPad. The State Statue Guide is available in the Apple App Store. The CMD has begun work to develop an App to highlight the Capitol Grounds.

The CVC continues to enhance its service to the congressional community. This fiscal year, the number of staff participating in the CVC's popular Capitol Tour Training increased by 25 percent and more than 17,000 staff have attended the training since it was initiated in 2009. In March, for the first time, the CVC offered staff the chance to learn how to give tours of the Capitol Grounds. More than 250 congressional staff and interns took advantage of this opportunity, which was designed to assist them in providing their constituents with alternative activities during the Rotunda closure period in April.



A Visitor Guide describes the Capitol's evolution to visitors in Exhibition Hall. The Exhibits and Education Division staff are in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of Exhibition Hall in an effort to determine potential upgrades.

Operations Summary (April 1, 2013 – September 30, 2013)

During this reporting period, the CVC welcomed its 10-millionth visitor. To recognize this milestone on June 7, the Architect of the Capitol joined the CVC CEO and CVC managers in welcoming the day's visitors. Signage in the Gift Shops, at information desks and on digital displays in Emancipation Hall thanked visitors for helping the CVC reach this landmark.

As usual, the CVC welcomed the bulk of its visitors in the spring, coinciding with the annual Cherry Blossom Festival. Approximately 213,000 visitors came through the CVC in April. This was a one-percent increase compared to visitation during this period in 2012.

While a number of high-profile events during the reporting period necessitated changes in the daily tour schedule, CVC staff adapted to the changes

seamlessly with as little disruption as possible in service to the public or Congress. On many of those special occasions, at the request of the Congressional leadership, CVC staff provided wayfinding and other logistical support functions.

In April, CVC staff assisted with the annual Days of Remembrance ceremony, the dedication of Room HVC-215 in honor of Gabriel Zimmerman, and a Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony for Muhammad Yunus. In May, the CVC staff accommodated three special events – the Joint Meeting of Congress for the address of Her Excellency Park Geun-hye, president of the Republic of Korea; Peace Officers Memorial Day; and the Memorial Day rehearsal and concert. In June, Emancipation Hall was the setting for the dedication ceremony for the statue of Frederick Douglass. In July, the staff provided assistance for the ceremony



Capitol Visitor Center staff welcome approximately 2.2 million visitors to the Capitol each year.

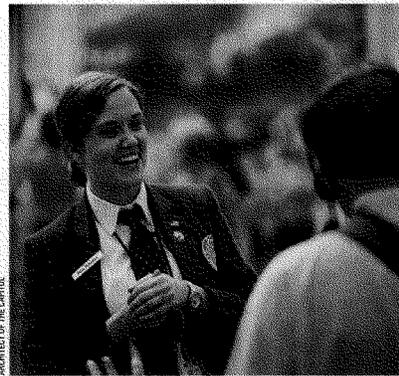
in Emancipation Hall celebrating the life of Nelson Mandela, and a week later the CVC team assisted in the annual wreath-laying ceremony for U.S. Capitol Police Officer Jacob Chestnut and Detective John Gibson. Later in the month, the CVC supported a ceremony in Statuary Hall recognizing the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington. Special events in September included the Labor Day concert, a Gold Medal ceremony in Statuary Hall, and a 9/11 remembrance ceremony.

After months of collaboration that included a series of on-site working retreats, the Visitor Services Division's Schedule Working Group finalized plans for a new schedule template for Visitor Assistants and Visitor Guides. The new schedule was implemented in mid-July, and frontline staff expressed overwhelmingly positive and optimistic feedback during a two-week "test and adjust" period. This new schedule improves the CVC's flexibility to adjust to seasonal fluctuations in visitation. The schedule also addresses concerns and requests from staff related to daily rotations and administrative or office time.

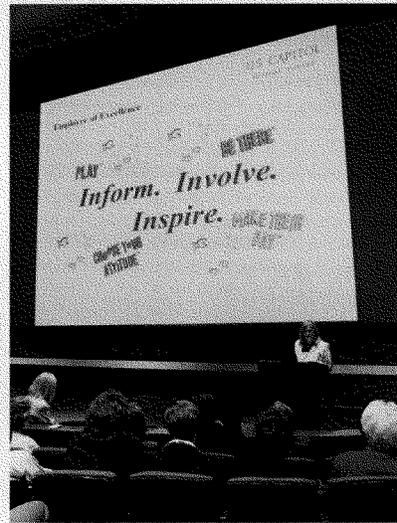
The CVC was active in the area of training throughout the reporting period. In May, several staff attended the annual American Alliance of Museums conference in Baltimore to compare best practices among museums and major visitor attractions. The Visitor Services staff focused on learning more about technology and equipment that could help improve

CVC operations, while other staff attended classes on visitor surveys, mobile applications, social media, exhibit diversity, and communications strategies.

As part of the CVC's ongoing efforts to solicit feedback from its staff, and as a follow-up to the Organizational Assessment Survey (OAS), the federal Office of Personnel Management was invited to come to the CVC in mid-June and conduct focus group discussions to explore OAS topics in greater depth. Eight sessions were held with groups consisting of eight to 15 employees. In addition to these follow-up actions, the CVC engaged the AOC Performance, Strategy and Innovation director as well as the president of the firm that developed the CVC brand, to help staff explore and identify opportunities to move the CVC's aspirational culture into closer alignment with the CVC and AOC strategic visions. In early September, a larger pool of CVC staff engaged in discussions focused on this initiative.



Visitor Guides strive to inspire every visitor to the Capitol.



The CVC team engaged in a number of team-building exercises in 2013.



Architect of the Capitol Stephen T. Ayers met with the entire CVC staff in late spring to brief them on upcoming projects.

The CVC's Exhibits and Education Division staff continued to work to enhance the visitor experience. In early September, the CVC presented a new display of historic artifacts and documents in Exhibition Hall entitled part two of *Conflicts and Compromise*. On the same day, the CVC began distributing a new brochure highlighting many of the documents in the new rotation. The EED has greatly augmented its educational programs, and its staff received an AOC Honor Award in September for the development of the CVC's student programs. Looking forward, the EED staff has engaged a museum consultant to assist the CVC in planning for refreshing the content of the orientation film and Exhibition Hall as the CVC approaches its 10-year anniversary in 2018.

The CVC's employee-driven goal teams continued to work across disciplines, focusing on internal issues such as organizational flexibility, innovation, communication, teamwork and strategic improvements. The Employee Effectiveness Goal Team organized the monthly Lunch and Learn program, the Employee of Excellence program and discussed a new social committee.

The Visitor Support Goal Team focused on how to better assist the non-English speaking visitor while the Congressional Support Goal Team worked to identify ways to improve signage at the CVC Information Desks, the staff walk-up line, the public lines, and the Senate Appointment Desk. The Partner Collaboration Goal Team worked on an initiative to strengthen the CVC culture by developing a set of standards unique to the CVC. The new standards would clarify the CVC's mission and vision, values, and principles by linking them with standards of professional behavior. Lastly, the Visitor Education Goal Team reviewed the educational goal of the CVC and how it relates to programming, exhibits and visitor engagement.

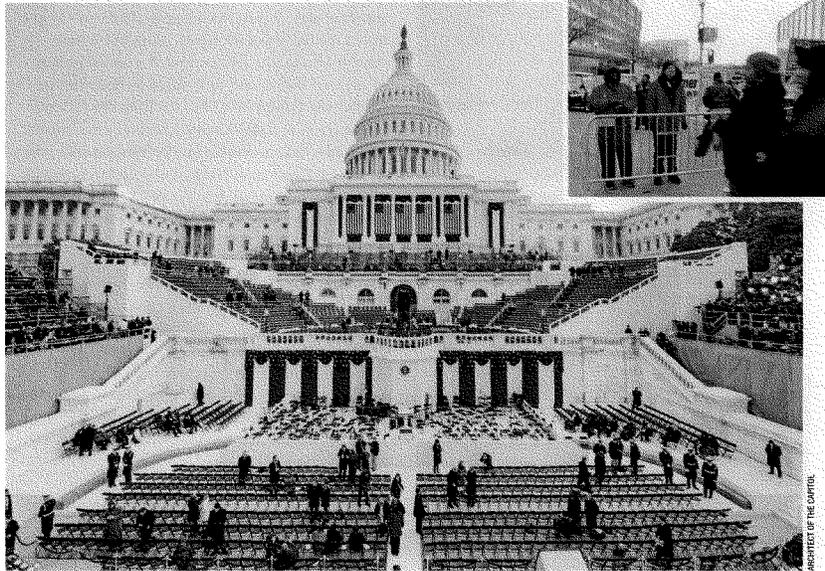
While the CVC team explores ways to build on the success of its first five years, it will continue to strive to enhance its service to Congress and to all visitors to the U.S. Capitol.

Operations Summary (October 1, 2012 – March 31, 2013)

During this reporting period, a number of high-profile events as well as an unexpected storm event caused significant changes in CVC operations and tested the responsiveness and flexibility of the CVC team. Staff were able to adapt to the changes seamlessly in order to minimize any disruptions in service to Congress or the visiting public.

In late October, the CVC was closed for two days due to Hurricane Sandy. Senior management quickly notified staff and acted swiftly to notify the public of the closure. In late December, the Capitol tour schedule was again disrupted by the Lying-In-State Ceremony of Senator Daniel Inouye. In February, the CVC staff adjusted to schedule changes prompted by the president's State of the Union address and the unveiling of the statue of Rosa Parks in National Statuary Hall.

The 57th Presidential Inauguration also was a significant event to impact CVC operations during this reporting period. On Monday, January 21, 130 CVC staff joined with other staff of the Architect of the Capitol in supporting the Inauguration. CVC employees provided assistance in a variety of ways for the event, including wayfinding in the House and Senate office buildings and connecting tunnels; assistance at screening checkpoints; shuttle service; VIP escort; and call center coverage. CVC senior staff and supervisors served as area leads in support of the CVC employees stationed in the Capitol, on Capitol Square and Union Square, and outside of the screening perimeters at gate check points and Metro stations. Staff of the CVC's Exhibits and Education Division also supported the event by overseeing the move of the Lincoln Table from Exhibition Hall to Statuary Hall for the Inaugural Luncheon.



CVC staff (inset) arrived at 5 a.m. on Monday, January 21, to support Inauguration Day activities.

In response to the CVC support for the event, Senator Charles Schumer, chairman of the Senate Rules Committee and of the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies, sent a note of thanks. In a letter to the CVC, the United States Capitol Police expressed their appreciation for the CVC team's outstanding support. "Thank you for the part you played in yesterday's festivities. We could not have done it without you. Your team's cooperation and willingness to serve was a welcome addition to our resources!" The CVC also received a Certificate of Appreciation from the chief of the United States Capitol Police.

On January 22nd, the CVC Gift Shops experienced their best single-day sales since the CVC opened in 2008. Inauguration-related merchandise, including



Merchandise inspired by the Inauguration helped the CVC Gift Shops experience their best single-day sales since opening in 2008.

two volumes of Inaugural addresses from President Washington to President Obama, as well as pins, key chains, magnets, T-shirts and commemorative coins, led sales during the entire week of the Inauguration.

In an effort to enhance the visitor experience in the days before and after the Inauguration, the CVC's Exhibits and Education Division (EED) coordinated three special Exhibition Hall talks by CVC staff about Inaugurations. In an effort to engage younger visitors during Inauguration week, the EED offered visitors the opportunity to create journals about the Inauguration and their visit to the Capitol. The EED also developed content for a flyer entitled "Inauguration Fun Facts," which was distributed to thousands of visitors during Inauguration week.

In March, and in advance of the spring rush of visitors, the EED launched two new informational programs, "What's Happening in the Chambers" and "Encounters in Exhibition Hall." The "Chambers" program helps orient visitors to the process of visiting the House and Senate Chambers. The "Encounters" program uses objects to engage and inform visitors about the history of Congress and the Capitol. Also in March, the EED unveiled a new selection of original documents in Exhibition Hall, entitled *Conflict and Compromise*. On loan from the Library of Congress and the National Archives, documents in the new selection focus on the Mexican War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Compromise of 1850, the Homestead Act, Women's Suffrage, and Emancipation, among other historic events.

On the personnel front, a major reorganization of the Visitor Services Division (VSD), begun last fall, helped the CVC become more efficient and adjust to seasonal fluctuations in visitation.

As part of the VSD's reorganization plan, permanent, part-time visitor assistants were hired for the first time. These positions are designed to fulfill the goals set out in the CVC's strategic hiring plan and give the VSD the staff it needs to accommodate the rapid and significant spike in visitation that occurs in early spring and then ramp down during the fall. The new staffing and scheduling model went into effect in early November and also includes cross-training of visitor guides and visitor assistants. Visitor guides are now familiar with and



CVC staff welcome up to 15,000 visitors a day during the peak spring season which continues into early June.

help to execute all of the duties of Visitor Services operations. Visitor guides and visitor assistants now operate from a single schedule maximizing coverage and increasing efficiency.

The CVC was also active in the area of training throughout the reporting period. In December, two training programs were launched to enhance the ability of staff to engage with visitors at all levels of CVC operations. An Interpretive Host program included a two-day workshop designed for staff who work at interpretive sites, but do not necessarily provide tours. The program consisted of customer service and hospitality training combined with the principles and techniques of informal interpretation. All visitor assistants and a number of staff in the areas of audio-visual support, special events, reservations and administration attended the program. An Interpretive Guide training program was provided to all permanent visitor guides, including newly-hired guides and visitor operations supervisors. Staff who participated in the training praised the

programs and found the instruction immediately applicable to their daily duties.

The CVC also continued to administer the CVC Employee Awards Program to recognize and celebrate employee accomplishments. The program highlights staff who have demonstrated exceptional levels of professionalism, proficiency, and adherence to the CVC's mission and goals during the period in which they were nominated. Nominees are individuals who sustained superior performance in the areas of service, teamwork and attitude that set them apart during the specified time period. An employee is selected every other month and all six employees selected during the calendar year are then considered for the Employee of the Year Award. The Employee of the Year best exemplifies the highest standards of performance and excellence.

On the communications front, the Communications and Marketing Division (CMD) introduced a new Visitor Guide in early fall 2012 that greatly enhances a visitor's awareness of CVC amenities



Among several maintenance efforts in Exhibition Hall in fall 2012, the Capitol Dome model was cleaned and restored.

and educational offerings. The CMD worked throughout the reporting period to develop a mobile application for the new Visitor Guide, which is expected to be launched in late spring 2013. The CMD also maintains a robust online presence to reach visitors before they arrive to the Capitol and to inform them of important logistical details and security restrictions.

While much of the CMD's efforts focused on providing information to visitors, the CVC's congressional liaisons maintained open lines of communications with the congressional community. Of particular note, the liaisons visited all 98 offices of the new members of the 113th Congress in both the House and Senate. The liaisons delivered comprehensive CVC information packets and



Early in 2013, in advance of the peak spring season, new countertops and table tops were installed in the CVC Restaurant.

established key points of contact in each office to ensure information about CVC operations would reach the appropriate staff involved in providing staff-led tours and reserving meeting spaces.

As the CVC staff maintained a high level of customer service to both Congress and the visiting public, the building itself began showing signs of wear and tear, especially the CVC Restaurant. The hundreds of thousands of patrons each year to the restaurant had taken their toll on the countertops around the salad bar and the tabletops in the dining area. Both the countertops and tabletops were replaced with more durable materials that are easier to maintain, and the work was completed well in advance of the busy spring season.

Exhibition Hall was also in need of maintenance. During two weekends in October and November, the Capitol Dome model at the center of Exhibition Hall was cleaned and restored. The scale replica of the Apotheosis of Washington painting on the model's interior was also repaired. At the same time, an AOC crew replaced broken glass floor panels while other workers installed a more secure and attractive mount for the Brumidi Gold Medal located on the backside of the Dome model.

In fall 2012, the CVC actively participated in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). As part of this effort, the CVC hosted the AOC's kick-off to the CFC's agency-wide activities and CVC keyworkers held contests and raffles during the Thanksgiving and December holiday season. Fueled by these activities, the CVC staff exceeded their CFC contributions goal.

While CVC operations continued to run smoothly throughout the reporting period, senior management continued to use the existing goal team structure to focus on internal issues related to organizational flexibility, innovation, communication, teamwork and strategic management, among other topics. Staff at all levels and in all divisions participated on these goal teams, which continue to contribute to a greater sense of teamwork and ownership among staff.

Going forward, the CVC staff will continue to build on these organizational, operational and educational initiatives to further enhance their service to Congress and to all visitors to the U.S. Capitol.



The Capitol Visitor Center serves as the portal to the Capitol for approximately 2.3 million visitors each year.

Operations Summary (April 1 through September 30, 2012)

During this reporting period, the CVC experienced its highest single visitation day since January 2009. On Friday, June 8, the CVC welcomed 17,563 visitors, many of whom were in town for celebrations on the National Mall to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Girl Scouts. The CVC staff, in particular the Visitor Services Division (VSD), successfully accommodated this high volume of visitors throughout the week of June 4.

The month of June was also active for the CVC Restaurant which experienced two record transaction days on June 8 and June 20. Sales totaled approximately \$27,000 on each of those days.

The CVC reached another milestone on Saturday, June 23, when it welcomed its eight-millionth visitor since its opening. Overall, the CVC continues to welcome an average of 2.3 million visitors annually.

Throughout the reporting period, the VSD provided wayfinding assistance, shuttle service, and other support for numerous high-profile congressionally-sponsored special events at the Capitol. Support for these events is discussed in greater detail in the Visitor Services Division section of this report.

In a continuing effort to make CVC operations more efficient and effective, CVC senior management created a new division called the Planning, Evaluation and Operations Division. The mission of this division is to lead, manage and oversee interdepartmental operations and budget formation and execution. Fay Ott, formerly the CVC's

administrative officer, was appointed the director of this new division, and she will also provide guidance to the other CVC divisions on staffing and training.

On a continuing basis, the CVC management offered customer service training to all staff. The VSD staff also was given the chance to sign up for two specialized training programs. The Interpretive Guide program combines the theoretical foundations of the guide profession with practical skills in delivering quality interpretive programming to visitors. The Interpretive Host program, which begins in January 2013, combines customer service with informal interpretation and is appropriate for Visitor Assistants and Gift Shop Sales Associates.

In mid-August, the CVC senior management team intensified its efforts to address the CVC's organizational challenges identified in the Organizational Assessment Survey (OAS). Taking advantage of its existing goal team structure, the CVC senior management assigned each team two or three of the focus areas identified in the OAS from the categories of flexibility, ethics, rewards, innovation, training, supervision, resources, communication, employee support, teamwork, strategic management, and customer orientation.

In order to accommodate the expanded mission of the goal teams, the teams expanded their membership. After their first meetings with the expanded teams, the goal team owners reported that the opportunity for more frontline staff to participate and contribute has fostered a greater sense of teamwork and ownership of the challenges facing the CVC.

The Visitor Services Division continued to assess the efficiency of its own organization, and to this end, its senior managers undertook a number of key personnel actions. For example, a scheduler was hired to manage the daily operations and special events schedules for Visitor Guides and Visitor Assistants.

Under the guidance of its new director, Carol Beebe, the Exhibits and Education Division (EED) in September installed its seventh rotation of loaned historic documents and artifacts. Entitled "Instruments of Change," this exhibit showcases the petitions, investigations, and Acts of Congress that affect the lives of citizens and the direction of the nation. The CVC Communications and Marketing Division developed a new brochure to accompany this installation, which has been made available throughout the CVC and online.

The CVC also highlighted some of the items on display in the new exhibit during Constitution Week, September 17- 21. Throughout the week, experts from the Library of Congress and the National Archives provided short Exhibition Hall talks discussing items on display in the new exhibit and how they related to the Constitution. EED staff and CVC volunteers also provided a hands-on activity where visitors could create journals about the Constitution after having toured the Capitol.

On April 16, the CVC participated in Washington, D.C.'s Emancipation Day commemoration activities by offering a 15-minute Exhibition Hall talk presented by staff from the National Archives.



Capitol Visitor Center staff were recognized for a variety of achievements at the Architect's Honor Awards Ceremony in August 2012. Here, several CVC staff received a Team Award for the creation of the "Hooks and Artifacts" program.

The talks focused on the D.C. Compensated Emancipation Act, which was on display in Exhibition Hall. Additionally, CVC staff participated in a kick-off press conference held by Washington, D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray at the African-American Civil War Memorial and Museum.

In July, the CVC welcomed a new addition to its Exhibition Hall. The Congressional Gold Medal honoring Constantino Brumidi is now on display alongside the model of the Capitol Dome. A new interpretive panel adjacent to the medal celebrates Brumidi's incomparable contribution in decorating the Capitol.

On the security front, the Capitol Police Board approved a new prohibited items list that took effect on August 20. The CVC ensured that the new prohibited items list was visibly and thoroughly represented in all areas of communications, from exterior signage to the CVC website. Most important, the new list was included in the confirmation letter all visitors receive upon reserving a tour online.

The CVC's two Gift Shops were also active during the reporting period. To assist Gift Shops staff in addressing operational needs and to provide better customer service, in mid-July the Gift Shops changed operating hours so that the shops open at 9 a.m. rather than 8:30 a.m. This corresponds to the time that the first public tour ends and has resulted in a more efficient use of the Gift Shops staff's time during the morning hours.

In recognition of several of the accomplishments noted above, 29 CVC staff were recognized at the Architect's Honor Awards Ceremony. The Architect cited the CVC team and individuals for their extraordinary contributions to fulfilling the CVC mission. CVC teams received awards in the categories of Product/Process/Excellence, Service Excellence, Team Projects, and Small Business. A CVC team was also recognized with the Architect's Commendation Award for new education initiatives.

In 2013, the CVC staff will continue to build on these organizational, operational, and educational initiatives to further enhance its service to Congress and all visitors to the U.S. Capitol.

Capitol Visitor Center Operations Summaries – 2009-2011

CVC Operations Summary (April 1, 2011, through September 30, 2011)

In spring and summer 2011, the CVC staff hired key personnel, expanded educational opportunities, developed new informational materials, introduced new gift shop merchandise and restaurant offerings, and continued to make operational adjustments that are all aimed at enriching the experience of every visitor to the Capitol.

As the Visitor Services Division continued to welcome thousands of visitors to the Capitol each day, the division welcomed both a new Director and a new Assistant Director for Visitor Operations. The Assistant Director for Operations is an entirely new position with oversight over both Visitor Guides and Visitor Assistants in an effort to have a more cohesive Visitor Services operation.

As up to 15,000 visitors entered the Capitol a day during the spring and summer of 2011, the Exhibits and Education Division completed the installation of a new exhibit showcasing historic treasures related to Congress and the Civil War while continuing to develop and refine educational programs and activities. In support of these initiatives, the Marketing and Communications Division developed and designed a variety of communications materials including brochures, bookmarks, flyers, notices, and other publications; coordinated congressional staff information and training sessions; and reached out to the public to share information on significant CVC milestones, educational programs, exhibits, and logistical details.

The Gift Shops staff completed a successful summer selling season prompted by sales of July 4 and other seasonal merchandise. New products related to the Cherry Blossom Festival proved to be extremely popular with spring visitors.

The Restaurant and Special Events Division (RSED), responsible for overseeing the 530-seat CVC Restaurant and the CVC's 10 event spaces, continued to successfully manage a high volume of visitors to the Restaurant and the steady demand for the congressional meeting spaces within the CVC. As of September 2011, the RSED had supported more than 2,500 congressional events since the event spaces became available in December 2008.

The CVC Volunteer Division continued to provide support primarily to Visitor Services staff, but also provided valuable assistance to other CVC divisions. Through September 2011, 71 volunteers had given more than 7,000 hours of service in a variety of areas including wayfinding, customer service, and administrative functions. Now in its second year, the Volunteer Program has moved from a pilot program into an important permanent component of the CVC operation.

The CVC staff remains committed to reviewing and modifying operational procedures and exploring new opportunities to further enhance the visitor experience to the U.S. Capitol.

Administratively, the CVC management has established a five-year timeline for achieving established operational goals. These goals and related activities are discussed in detail in the Looking Forward section of this report on page 15.

Following are summaries highlighting some of the notable accomplishments and activities of each of the CVC operational divisions.

CVC Operations Summary (October 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011)

On February 8, 2011, Architect of the Capitol Stephen T. Ayers, AIA, LEED, AP, announced the selection of Ms. Beth Plemmons as Chief Executive Officer for Visitor Services at the Capitol Visitor Center. In this role, Ms. Plemmons is responsible for managing the numerous functions within the Capitol Visitor Center including Visitor Services, Education and Exhibits, Restaurant and Special Events, Gift Shops, Audio Visual, Information Technology, Financial Administration, Training, and General Administration. She routinely works with congressional and committee staffs, the U.S. Capitol Police, and others regarding the goals and requirements associated with providing a warm and welcoming guest experience at the U.S. Capitol.

With a new CEO in place, all CVC divisions were able to focus on their specific missions. As the Visitor Services Division continued to welcome visitors and accommodate tours of the Capitol, the Exhibits and Education Division continued to develop and refine educational programs and activities, and created new website content aimed at making the treasures in Exhibition Hall more accessible to the public. In support of these initiatives, the Communications and Marketing Division developed and designed a variety of communications materials including brochures, flyers, notices, and other publications; coordinated congressional staff information sessions; and reached out to the public to share information on significant CVC milestones, educational programs, exhibits, and logistical details.

The Gift Shops staff completed a successful winter selling season prompted by sales of holiday ornaments and other seasonal merchandise. In early spring 2011, the Gift Shops experienced their highest sales on record as new products related to the Cherry Blossom Festival proved to be extremely popular with spring visitors.

The Restaurant and Special Events Division (RSED), responsible for overseeing the 530-seat CVC Restaurant and the CVC's 10 event spaces, continued to successfully manage a high volume of visitors to the Restaurant and the steady demand for the congressional meeting spaces within the CVC. As of March 2011, the RSED had supported more than 2,000 congressional events since the event spaces became available in December 2008.

Lastly, the CVC Volunteer Division continued to provide support primarily to Visitor Services staff, but also provided valuable assistance to other CVC divisions. Through March 2011, volunteers had given more than 4,700 hours of service in a variety of areas including wayfinding, customer service, and administrative functions. Now entering its second year, the Volunteer Program has moved from a pilot program into an important permanent component of the CVC operation.

Despite these successes and more than two full years of operational experience, the CVC staff remain committed to reviewing and modifying operational procedures and exploring new opportunities to further enhance the visitor experience to the U.S. Capitol.

CVC Operations Summary (April 1, 2009, through September 30, 2009)

By late September 2009, after just ten months of operation, the Capitol Visitor Center had welcomed more than two million visitors; a pace of visitation that is double that of recent years. Yet despite accommodating twice as many visitors to the Capitol, the average time a visitor waited to enter the CVC continued to be only six minutes - a dramatic decrease from the two-to-three-hour wait period during peak periods in past years.

Working closely with Members of Congress and Congressional staff, the Visitor Services Division staff implemented modifications to procedures to enhance their ability to promptly accommodate tens of thousands of tour requests received from Congressional offices, particularly through the peak spring and summer seasons.

As the Visitor Services Division continues to improve its operational efficiency, the Exhibits and Education Division continued its efforts to develop programs and activities aimed at enriching each visitor's experience during their visit to the Capitol. In support of these operational and educational initiatives, the CVC Communications & Marketing Division developed a variety of communications materials including brochures, flyers, notices, and other publications; coordinated Congressional staff information sessions, and reached out to media outlets to publicize CVC milestones, educational programs, and exhibits.

First Semiannual Report Submitted by the Capitol Visitor Center

Following is the Capitol Visitor Center's first submission of a Semiannual Report to the Committee on House Administration and the Senate Rules Committee in May 2009. This initial report did not include an Operations Summary. However, it did briefly describe the bi-cameral planning involved in the start-up of the facility and touched on the key challenges the CVC team faced while implementing a completely new tour entry process for the U.S. Capitol.

For this written testimony to the Committee on House Administration, the "Background" information and much of the other original text from the first Semiannual Report has been included to help recall the scope of activities necessary to effectively and efficiently open the Capitol Visitor Center to the public.

CVC Semiannual Report (December 2, 2008 through April 30, 2009)

Background

In 2002, during the early construction phase of the Visitor Center, the Architect of the Capitol hired an independent consultant to develop a comprehensive operations plan to prepare the Visitor Center for its opening to the public.

In 2004, as operational planning continued, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on House Administration, in conjunction with the Capitol Preservation Commission (which was overseeing the construction of the Visitor Center) and Congressional leadership began work to establish the governing policies for the Visitor Center. Toward this end, multiple sessions were held to address the foundational goals, principles and key decisions upon which to base operations planning for the facility. Attending the sessions were bi-cameral, bi-partisan, staff representing the Capitol Preservation Commission, the Senate and House Sergeants-at-Arms, the Senate and House Appropriations Committees, the Secretary of the Senate, the Clerk of the House, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, the Committee on House Administration, offices of both the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders, the office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives, and the Architect of the Capitol. Bi-cameral staff representatives of both majority and minority leadership also participated in the sessions.

Participants at the planning sessions reached consensus on numerous issues and established an overarching operations philosophy and guidelines for operational decisions. With the ongoing guidance of its Congressional partners, the Visitor Center working group rigorously upheld these principles, guidelines and decisions to prepare a comprehensive plan.

As planning efforts continued, the Architect of the Capitol hired the Chief Executive Officer for Visitor Services (CEOVS) in September 2007. As a primary initiative, the CEOVS compiled and crystallized the governing policies and operational procedures for the Capitol Visitor Center into a report entitled, "Report on the Implementation of CVC Operations Decisions," which was submitted to Congressional leadership in November 2007. Along with all operational

components, the report addressed the integration of the U.S. Capitol Guide Service into the Capitol Visitor Center and under the purview of the Architect of the Capitol. The transfer, which occurred in the fall of 2008, ensured that all Visitor Center staff would be governed by the same personnel policies, thus facilitating the effective management of Visitor Center staff and the day-to-day operations of the facility.

With an operations plan in place, and as the hiring of personnel to run the Visitor Center continued through the summer of 2008, Visitor Center management began to develop plans to analyze the theoretical policies and procedures of the facility through a comprehensive "test and adjust" process.

Test and Adjust Process

On October 17, 2008, six weeks prior to the official opening date of December 2, 2008, the Visitor Center invited guests to participate in a "test and adjust" process. This process would allow operations staff to observe procedures in action, and to amend them as needed, prior to welcoming visitors to the facility.

Approximately 17,000 guests participated in the exercise, and the use of this smaller population allowed the Visitor Center staff to focus its assessment. Valuable insight was gained on issues such as: emergency procedures, directional signage, tour line locations, food service operations, employee training requirements, and other operational components. Of particular importance, Visitor Center staff learned the value of remaining flexible in order to adapt to a variety of unplanned situations such as emergency evacuation drills and elevator outages.

Approximately 85 percent of the visitors surveyed stated that, overall, the Visitor Center met or exceeded their expectations. More than 70 percent praised the orientation film and the Exhibition Hall and its educational opportunities.

The official test and adjust period ended on the date of the opening of the facility. However, during the first few critical months after opening, the Visitor Center staff has continued to observe the impact of operations, while attending to a full complement of visitors, and to review and amend its procedures and actions to meet the demands that have arisen. Due to these actions, the Visitor Center staff has been able to successfully accommodate all visitors to the facility - with very short waiting periods, if any. As daily visitor counts have often exceeded 15,000 persons during the spring season - an action which may continue through the summer months - and with the infusion of the remaining employees required to fully staff the facility, Visitor Center staff will continue to test all of the policies and procedures that govern the operation of the facility.

Operations

In mid-May 2009, after just 5 ½ months since its doors opened to the public, the Visitor Center welcomed its one-millionth visitor. Less than half of that number of visitors were documented entering the Capitol during the same period one year earlier. Between March and April 2009, Visitor Center staff welcomed an average of 15,500 visitors a day, and on a rainy day in early April, they greeted a record 19,473 visitors. In past years, that number could have resulted in visitors waiting up to four hours outside in the elements, or in one of the tunnels from the Congressional

office buildings. Due to the Visitor Center's greatly expanded screening zone, the average visitor wait outside the facility is now, on average, approximately six minutes.

Visitor Services

As crowds of visitors pour through the Visitor Center's doors every day, the Visitor Services team is attentive to their needs and dedicated to providing all visitors with a high quality experience. The Visitor Center staff also work directly with Members of Congress and their staffs to accommodate and enhance constituents requesting tours of the Capitol through their offices.

The Visitor Services team worked diligently through the peak tourism period in early spring 2009 to accommodate all public and Congressional tour requests. As a result of the measures taken by Visitor Services, rarely did a group of visitors wait longer than 20 minutes for a tour of the Capitol. Despite these early successes, the Visitor Center team recognizes that it is still in its early phase of operations, and will continue to modify and refine its policies and procedures in conjunction with its Congressional partners in the House and Senate.

Since the opening, the Visitor Services team has also provided support for a variety of Congressional events including the Presidential address to Congress and ceremonies such as the unveiling of the bust of Sojourner Truth on April 28, 2009. Most notably, the team provided outstanding support in managing the record crowds present for the Presidential Inauguration on January 20, 2009.

Education and Programming

The Education staff have developed a range of educational offerings in the Exhibition Hall to reflect the rich diversity of the history of Congress chronicled in the Visitor Center exhibition, *E Pluribus Unum: Out of Many, One*. Currently, visitors can participate in short tours of Exhibition Hall, which focus on the evolution of the country, Congress, and the Capitol.

E Pluribus Unum: Out of Many, One, is a permanent display which celebrates the rich history of democracy in the United States and the United States Capitol. It contains more than 150 artifacts, including 48 documents from the Library of Congress and the National Archives, which are displayed with interpretive labels, facsimiles, photographs, and models to encourage the visitor educational experience. *E Pluribus Unum: Out of Many One*, provides the visitor with a comprehensive overview of Congress as it is the only exhibition in the country dedicated solely to the story of Congress and the Capitol.

The main feature of the exhibition is a marble wall running the length of the gallery, anchored in the center with a 1/20th scale, touchable model of the Capitol dome. Flanking the dome model on either side are six thematic sections with inset cases for the display of items.

Some of the displayed documents are original and sensitive to light exposure, therefore they are periodically removed and replaced for preservation. This "rotation" process occurs every six months which allows for the infusion of new documents relative to the overarching theme. The Visitor Center successfully completed its first full rotation in April 2009 with the installation of 55 documents.

Completing the visitor experience in Exhibition Hall are two ten-minute films on the House and Senate presented in small theaters. There are also six videos that highlight landmark legislation, and another video, which presents notable events that have occurred in the United States since 1978. Twenty touchscreen viewing stations provide a variety of interactive programs for visitors, including a virtual tour of the Capitol, and a quiz where visitors can test their Congressional knowledge. In all, the Capitol Visitor Center exhibition provides the visitor with an enriching and informative experience.

Special Events and Restaurant Services

The Visitor Center Restaurant and Special Events Division supports the food service operations and the myriad of special events that occur within the Visitor Center's event spaces. While the Visitor Center closes to the general public at 4:30 p.m., Congressionally-sponsored events can occur from early morning until 11 p.m. The Congressional Auditorium, with a seating capacity of 450, is the largest of the event spaces, and is used almost daily for a variety of functions. In less than six months of operation, the Special Events team supported more than 400 events in the Visitor Center, and will support several hundred more events scheduled through early summer 2009.

The Restaurant team also oversees the contractor that operates the Visitor Center Restaurant. The 500-seat restaurant offers a variety of food choices that reflect the diverse bounty of the country. The restaurant continues to receive high marks for food quality and customer service. On several occasions during peak visitation periods, the restaurant has reached its full capacity; a robust pace of customers is expected to continue throughout the year.

Gift Shops

The Gift Shop team researches and locates unique keepsakes and high quality gift items, which are featured in the Capitol Visitor Center's two gift shops. Located on the Visitor Center's upper level, the North and South gift shops sell books, DVDs, jewelry and scarves, Capitol collectibles, prints and posters, adult and children's apparel, and educational toys and games. Each item is related to the U.S. Capitol or Congress, including reproductions of artifacts in the Exhibition Hall or art and architecture in the Capitol, and books about the workings of our representative democracy. Congressional appropriations provided the start-up funds to purchase the gift shops' inventory. In the first six months of operation, both gift shops have experienced strong sales and the proceeds are, by statute, deposited into a newly established revolving fund account designated for the Visitor Center at the United States Treasury. Some of the proceeds have been used to restock depleted inventory.

Information Technology and Audio Visual Support

The Visitor Center employs various technology sources in the operation of the facility. An automated telephone system is used to provide visitors with tour information and processes. The

Gift Shops record transactions on its point-of-sales system and technology is required to operate the orientation theaters, Exhibition Hall theaters, touch screen interactive displays, and visual signage. Audio headsets are also used to conduct tours. To operate and service the varied technologies, the Information Technology and Audio Visual teams provide services to each affected department and also service the needs of Congressional-sponsored events held in the Visitor Center event spaces.

Communications

As the entrance to the Capitol, the Visitor Center, through its Communications staff, provides valuable information on Congress and the Capitol to the public. The Communications team operates the Visitor Center Website, develops brochures, press kits and, external and internal releases. The Communications staff are also a conduit of information to Congressional offices.

Congressional Historical Interpretive Training Program

Prior to the public opening, Visitor Center training staff developed the Congressional Historical Interpretive Program (CHIP) to assist Congressional staff leading tours of the Capitol with the tools necessary to present consistent, compelling, and accurate tours. At the same time, the training provides staffers valuable understanding of life-safety and evacuation procedures and Visitor Center logistical processes.

More than 2,200 staffers participated in CHIP and strong attendance is expected to continue throughout the year. Equally important, the staffers who have participated in the training are more familiar with the Visitor Center and are better prepared to share its many amenities and educational opportunities with constituents.

To accommodate congressional staffers, both a one-day training program and a two-day training program were developed. The one-day program provides basic training to lead tours of the Capitol and teaches emergency procedures and evacuation routes. The two-day program has a similar curriculum but also provides in-depth historical training, and includes presentations from congressional curators and historians.

The training staff has continued to evaluate and refine its offerings, particularly in light of the time constraints expressed by congressional offices, and is exploring ways to make the training more effective to further facilitate congressional staff participation.

Visitor Center Staff Training

Staff training is critical to the success of the Visitor Center. All Visitor Center staff were trained to properly represent the Capitol and Congress with the utmost courtesy and professionalism. The training of the Capitol Guides, Visitor Assistants and Gift Shop personnel is especially critical as they are the "front-line" ambassadors for the organization.

Tour operations are managed by the Visitor Services department of the Visitor Center. Visitor Center management is keenly aware that the success of the facility is measured, ultimately, by the quality of the visitor's experience. This experience was directly related to the visitor's interaction

with Visitor Services through its Visitor Assistants at the CVC entrances, Information Desks, and Orientation Theaters; and the Capitol Guides who lead visitors on tours of the Capitol.

Recognizing the critical need for quality visitor-to-staff interface, the Visitor Center training staff developed a two-week full-time intensive training program for Capitol Guides and Visitor Assistants. The training was focused on enhancing Visitor Services staff members' ability to be professional, accurate, courteous, dynamic, resourceful and energetic. The training includes seminars on Capitol and Congressional history, emergency preparedness, visitor etiquette, accommodating persons with disabilities, public speaking, and a full array of other educational and behavioral topics. Additional seminars and training opportunities were offered throughout the year, and personal study is strongly encouraged.

Further, recognizing the relative unfamiliarity of the Capitol Visitor Center, not only to visitors but to the 20,000 employees on Capitol Hill, all Visitor Center personnel participate in a full day of orientation training, which includes an emergency preparedness component, to ensure their ability to respond calmly, quickly and efficiently to any situation that arises.

Advance Reservation System

The Visitor Center team contracted the development of an efficient and user-friendly Web-based system to schedule tours of the Capitol. This "Advance Reservation System" (ARS) allows greater opportunities for constituents and other visitors to schedule tours. The fixed schedule of tour times makes possible a steady influx of visitors to the Capitol, which assists with security control, and allows a distribution of tour passes to constituents and visitors throughout the day. This updated process also allows visitors to plan their activities in advance by having a guaranteed time for their Capitol tour; and facilitates Member offices assisting constituents with planning their visit to the Capitol.

As a Web-based system, ARS is available at all times and, in its first six months of operation, the public and Member offices have successfully scheduled thousands of tours. International visitors are also able to easily plan their visit to the Capitol through the ARS system.

Capitol Visitor Center – Visitor Comments

The Capitol Visitor Center receives hundreds of comments from visitors each year through its website. Visitors write most often about their tour experience. Following is a sampling of comments received from January through early May 2018. The comments are a testament to the passion and dedication CVC employees have in fulfilling their mission to “inform, involve and inspire every visitor to the U.S. Capitol.”

I want to thank you for providing such a lovely tour of the Capitol for the students at Ludlow-Taylor elementary. In an era of video games and smart phones, children can often be easily distracted. Not the case with your tour! The reviews I heard from the children were incredible. They were engaged, excited and couldn't stop talking about what they had learned.

Most importantly, the children now feel connected to the legislative process, in a way that they were not before. Many of these children live just blocks from the Capitol, yet have never even come close to it. Your tour provided them access they would not have had otherwise, and I hope, encouraged many of them to become even more engaged in our free republic and all that it affords each one of us.

So, thank you again for making the children feel so welcome. It warms my heart to know how much time you took to make sure the children had a wonderful Capitol tour experience. It exceeded everyone's expectations and for that, I am so grateful.

Warm regards,
Kimberly Halkett

Greetings,

I wanted to follow with some comments after my Capitol tour last week. My wife and I and our four young daughters were paired with Shane Edwards. In short, he was excellent...kind, considerate, knowledgeable, and funny. He really put such a positive stamp on our visit to Washington, D.C. A telling bit of evidence is testimony from my 5 year old, who said that the Capitol tour was the favorite part of our trip. It beat swimming in the hotel pool, airplanes, ice cream, museums, etc. Pretty impressive. Thanks to Shane for putting such a good face on our government and making us feel so welcome.



Visitor Guide Shane Edwards

Ed Blough

Our group visited the Capitol on January 12 and we wanted to thank Nora O'Reilly for a thoroughly enjoyable and educational experience. We found Ms. O'Reilly to be knowledgeable and engaging - a great representative of our nation's Capitol and your Visitor Services Division. Kudos!

Tino & Cindy Kokkinos, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

To whom it may concern,

Please forward this email to Jeremy Blackman's Supervisor. I came to the Capitol this afternoon for a tour. I was fortunate to end up with Jeremy's group. He was excellent. Not only professional, articulate, and knowledgeable, but he has a great sense of humor that makes a tour like this very enjoyable. I just wanted you to know that he's Very Good at what he does and an employee you need to try to hang onto. He's an asset and very talented. If all of your tour guides are like him, then my experience today is giving me a 'new found love for our government.'

All the best, John Coban, Boca Raton, FL

I wanted to take a moment to extend my gratitude for a recent experience at the U.S. Capitol. My mother and I visited on December 21st and had the pleasure of taking a tour with Ms. Janet Clemens as our guide. Not only was she highly knowledgeable, she did a fantastic job with a somewhat challenging group. Though not all participants were eager to follow the courtesies asked, Ms. Clemens redirected with professionalism and an interest in making the tour meaningful for all. It was a wonderful experience and Ms. Clemens should be commended for her work each day, bringing knowledge to the many visitors she sees in an efficient manner.



Visitor Guide Janet Clemens

Please feel free to contact me should you have any additional questions or seek more information regarding our visit.

Bridgett L. Brookbank

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My family attempted to secure multiple tours (White House, Capitol, FBI, Supreme Court, etc.) through our Congressional offices prior to our visit to Washington, D.C., during the week after Christmas. We were highly disappointed to learn that most agencies either close or do not run tours during that timeframe, but we were excited that we were, in fact, granted a Capitol tour.

On December 28, 2017, as visitors were being processed for the tour, we were instructed to select one of three tour lines. We randomly selected line 1 and had the good fortune of having Mr. Matthew Wong as our tour guide. Matt's command of the subject matter was obvious, and we enjoyed the tour immensely.

We believe Matt to be an exemplary employee and an outstanding ambassador for your agency, and it is my sincere hope that you will recognize him for his outstanding work, his generosity, and his tremendous kindness toward our family. I also hope you will retain this message and use it in support of opportunities for further recognition or promotions for which he may be eligible in the future. Thank you for your consideration and for allowing us to recognize Matt for a job extremely well done!!

Trish Biddix, Tucson, AZ

I just wanted to take a moment to inform you of how delighted we were with our guide during our tour of the Capitol yesterday, April 26, 2018. Kathleen was incredibly engaging, in particular considering she was working with some sleep-deprived 13 year olds. She was funny and warm and informative. I watched the faces of my students as they listened to her, and they were quite captivated. Quite a few of them talked to me afterwards about how much they had enjoyed listening to her and interacting with her. They felt valued, and they were definitely educated and entertained by the experience. Kathleen was truly one of the highlights of our trip to DC.



Visitor Guide Kathleen Gary

Mark Honeyman

My four daughters and I did a Capitol tour on Monday morning, Jan 15, with Alyssa Warrick. I made a point to tell her personally how much I enjoyed her tour. I wanted to take a moment to pass along my appreciation to you as well. She had such energy, enthusiasm, knowledge, and humor. She was the best tour guide I've had at the Capitol so far. She encouraged questions, answered any question presented, and was full of great information. I hate that I misplaced her card, because I would have made a point to ask for her when I tour again (I like to bring family when we visit D.C.). I know people are quick to write with complaints, but I wanted to make a point to take the time and acknowledge the great work she does. The Gray girls from WV appreciate it!

Thank you for having such great staff.
Sandy Gray, West Virginia

I would like to recognize the great performance by one of your Capitol tour guides, Maryellen Bradford. My wife and I travel extensively, and we've had the fortunate opportunity to be on many tours. My wife and I both agreed that Ms. Bradford would rank among the top tour guides we have ever had. It's great to see such enthusiasm for the job and her desire to share the rich history of the U.S. Capitol. Please help us by letting Ms. Bradford know what a great job she is doing!



Visitor Guide Maryellen Bradford

Thank you,
Tom and Chris May

This past Friday, January 26, I chaperoned a group of 17 Girl Scouts from Silver Spring, MD, and we were so very lucky to be assigned Mr. Aaront for our large and not always so easy group of 9-year-old future leaders. Mr. Aaront was amazing: He exhibited the rarest mix of deep subject matter knowledge, patience and charm, wit and patience and overall fun - so much so that all the girls were captivated by his stories, were attentive the entire time of the visit and learned a lot. As a father of 2 myself, I was truly in awe at seeing such a young man being so good, smart, and patient with children. We need to clone Mr. Aaront and distribute his clones all around the world!

Sincerely,
Andrea Limauro, Silver Spring, MD

Hello,

My wife Rachelle and I visited the Capitol last Saturday, January 27, 2018, at around 3 p.m., and right away at the Visitor Center we were greeted by visitor services division employee David Linn. He was so nice and helpful to us. He immediately looked at us and said "hello, welcome to the Capitol Visitor Center, what can I help you with." He helped us by giving us a map of D.C. & showing us good memorials to visit as well. It's rare to find customer service like that these days. You can tell that David Linn loves his job. He was so respectful to us. I wanted his superiors to know this!



Visitor Guide David Linn

What a great experience we had being at the Capitol and the White House and the monuments in Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, we were not able to see the Senate chambers in the Capitol because we arrived on a Saturday; however, the rest of the building was so awesome. We hope to one day get passes to see the rest of the Capitol, Senate chamber, etc. We will definitely be back to visit. Thank you!

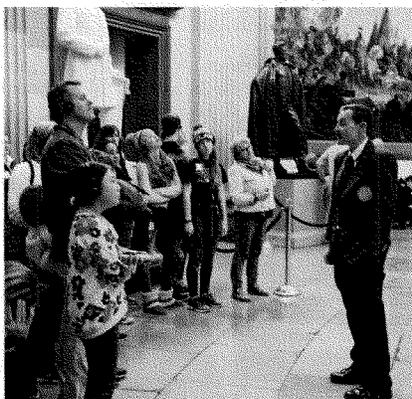
Chris Naples

We visited the Capitol last Saturday and were so impressed with each interaction. Our tour guide, Nicholas Oristian, was extraordinary and we learned so much. Initially, we were met by David Linn, who greeted us like friends and welcomed us to the Capitol. I am in a wheelchair and he was especially helpful. Just before the tour, he stood before the group and explained about voting rights with passion. We had never heard it explained like he did. Later, after we completed the tour, we ran into him again, and he stopped and asked us how we liked the tour. We never expected to be treated so well. Thank you for a wonderful experience we will never forget.

Elizabeth Fannin, Ocala, Florida

Dear Capitol Visitor Center,

When we planned our visit to Washington, DC, the thought of visiting the Capitol did not enter our minds. We had an incredible tour of the White House and really did not think anything could compare. As we walked down the Mall, we took some pictures in front of the Capitol and asked a Capitol police officer if we were allowed to enter. He directed us to the Visitor Center and within a few minutes we were in the theater viewing the welcome presentation. Upon exiting, Dan Pearson approached us and asked that we join his group. He was amazing. His personality was outgoing, entertaining and informative. I can't remember a tour we have taken where we enjoyed our time so much. It was a disappointment when it came to the end. Mr. Pearson graciously stuck around to answer any follow-up questions we had in great detail. He then gave



Visitor Guide Danny Pearson

us detailed instruction on how to visit the gallery. Our noon picture opportunity ended that evening at 8:30 PM as the House adjourned. What a wonderful day! I can only imagine that Mr. Pearson is considered a great asset to the Capitol staff and receives many compliments. He is certainly the topic of conversation when we boast about our day at the U.S. Capitol. Thank You Capitol Visitor Center and thank you Mr. Pearson.

Sincerely,

Hugh and Jacqueline Knefel, Tonganoxie, KS

I just wanted to write a letter to commend two of your educational staff members. On Saturday, February 3, a friend and I were walking around the exhibit area. As we were looking at the table used at Lincoln's inauguration, Matt and Mary Beth saw I was confused about something and stepped in to clarify. They then spent the next 30 minutes telling us all the ins and outs of the Capitol. They showed us their favorite exhibit pieces and gave us information that would not have

been readily available otherwise. They did an exceptional job, and made it a truly wonderful experience. Y'all made my day, and I am definitely coming back.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Nichols, Ph.D. (History Nerd-Extraordinaire)

Hello,

Having taken the Capitol tour for seven years now, with my fifth grade class, I wanted to let you know that Carrie Gallagher has far outperformed any docent. She was very engaging not only with the students but with the parents as well. The vast wealth of information has consistently been great, but Carrie went well above her mark and tailored her speeches for our Kentucky students. She had the kids role play with the pairings in the Dome, she interacted more than ever with the statutes, and my class responded greatly with her. If there is some sort of accommodation or award, Carrie Gallagher needs the recognition!

I was highly impressed today with her overall work. Having taken seven groups along with my own family numerous times, hands down she is the best yet!



Visitor Guide Carrie Gallagher

Chris Camuel

Last week we visited both the Pentagon and the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center; two iconic buildings and two completely different levels of service. From the moment we arrived to the Visitor Center we were welcomed. We arrived early and were immediately accommodated to have our tour brought forward. (At the Pentagon we were left outside until the precise time!) We thoroughly enjoyed the short film, which set the scene for the tour ahead.

We then were introduced to Erin Ammon, an excellent tour guide, who pitched it at just the right level to ALL in her group. She made the information interesting, exciting, and encouraged questions from all and was extremely knowledgeable. (At the Pentagon the tour guide rushed us through and didn't engage at all with his group of 5!) We were encouraged to stay and explore the Visitor Center, and as we were interested in the Magna Carta, Erin personally took us back to view after the tour ended. (At the Pentagon we were shown the exit!) I do understand that the two tours are different but the levels of service we encountered were so vast, we just had to email your Center to express our thanks. Please do pass on our gratitude to Erin Ammon. She made this visit a highlight to our trip to Washington, D.C.

Very best wishes,
Sue Callistan, London UK

To Whom It May Concern,

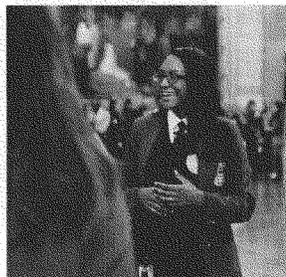
I just wanted to offer some positive comments regarding my tour experience via the Capitol Visitor Center during my week of governmental meetings in D.C. last week. My husband and I arrived in the Capitol tour area just before the last tour of the day was about to commence. Standing at a distance and not knowing the tour procedure, we thought we were about to miss the tour when one of your guides, Roberta Chapman, saw us and quickly and kindly secured two more tickets for us and escorted us into the tour group.

During the tour, Roberta was very engaging and knowledgeable and overall did an excellent job of representing the history and grandeur of our nation's beautiful Capitol Building. Please pass on these comments as appropriate and give Roberta our thanks and best regards.

Sincerely,
Debra Coffman, Sugar Land, Texas

I would like to commend Charmise Jackson for an excellent tour of the U.S. Capitol Building today. I was a member of the group Charmise led at 10:20 and could not have been more pleased with my experience. She is obviously quite knowledgeable but also demonstrated good humor, thoughtfulness and a considerable ability to engage with the group and maintain everyone's attention. I thoroughly enjoyed the morning and hope that your Division recognizes Charmise's gifts and talents.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Kurman, Indianapolis, IN



Visitor Guide Charmise Jackson

Capitol Visitor Center,

We feel compelled to write in praise of John Richardson who guided our tour of the Capitol. John maintained the interest of 30 sixth form students from Prince Henry's High School with great knowledge and a warm and generous personality. He answered their questions showing that he had a great rapport with them. We hope that you will pass on our thanks.
Clare Webb, John Martin and Jande Tozer

My girlfriend and I toured the Capitol with Sarah Peet today. She had a command of facts that made it obvious that we were only getting the tip of the iceberg of her knowledge and that she could have gone as deep as anyone in our group would have wanted to go. That said, she packed an amazing amount of information into a short tour.

I served as a volunteer docent on a historic lightship in Oakland CA for many years so know from whence I speak. I feel like an amateur compared to her. She also really seemed to enjoy her work, which made the tour more fun for everyone in our group.

Thank you for giving her the latitude to be herself, and make the tour her own. We won't soon forget it and when I get my next volunteer gig, (likely on the USS HORNET aircraft carrier), I'm going to study well and let my joy shine as she did.

Joe Blackett and Janet Rogers

Last Thursday I brought a group of students from Houston, Texas to tour the Capitol. The building itself was impressive but what impressed them most was the wonderful tour given by Janet Clemens. Her choice of comments kept the group engaged.

The day before the students had visited the Supreme Court and were eager to see the old Supreme Court while in the Capitol. When we asked her about this space toward the end of the tour, she clearly explained why it was not included in the rotation that day due to high visitor volume. She then proceeded to check if it was possible to add this room to our tour. The students were delighted with the accommodation and I appreciated Janet's service-oriented nature. I have taken quite a few student groups to the Capitol and this was by far one of the best.

Ann Burke

Director, Academic Seminars/The Washington Center for Internships & Academic Seminars

Dear Visitors Office,

I brought my daughter and three grandkids for Spring Break to Washington, D.C. We took a tour through the Capitol today 03/28/18 with Jessica Jackson. Loved her! So informative, very impressed with her knowledge. Presented in a friendly professional way. Loved her sense of humor. I nominate her for employee of the month!!

Sharon Viner/Bradenton, FL



Visitor Guide Jessica Jackson

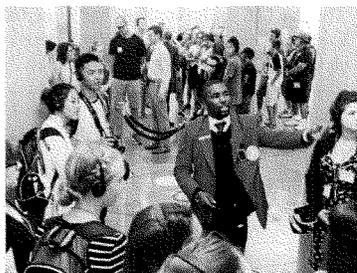
We visited the Capitol Saturday afternoon 4/21/18 and were lucky enough to have Mr. Andrew Hartsmith as our guide. He was wonderful -- knowledgeable, affable, patient, enthusiastic -- everything you'd want a guide to be. He was all this despite the fact that he has done this hundreds of times. I told him it's clear he loves his job and he said I was right. We wanted to make sure he had the praise he deserves for a job brilliantly done!

Dr. & Mrs. Robert B. Kebric (Judith)

I had the privilege of coming to the Capitol building on a tour with my son and his classmates from Clyde Elementary School in Clyde, NC. We had Laurel Martin as our tour guide and to say that she was amazing would be an understatement. My son has autism and can get distracted or lost in the shuffle, but Laurel kept him interested and entertained the entire tour. I have been on the Capitol tour 3 years in a row and this was by far the most educational as well as entertaining tour that I have been on so far!!! Laurel Martin was awesome and deserves a pat on the back from us!!!

Thank you,
Corrie Coats, Clyde NC

Just wanted to give you a heads-up that our tour (37 8th grade boys from Brunswick School in Greenwich, CT) last Tuesday morning (4/17) was made especially more pleasant, entertaining, and informative due to our guide, Marcus Cook. I have been leading our eighth grade Washington, D.C. trip for fifteen years and we have never had a more engaging, knowledgeable, funny, or personable guide. Mr. Cook "clicked" with our boys and connected with them in a way that was exceptional. Please pass along our sincerest thanks once again -- he is an absolute gem. Any group fortunate enough to have him steward their visit will not soon forget him.



Visitor Guide Marcus Cook

Anthony Fischetti, Greenwich, CT

I'm writing to contact Jacob Field. Jacob Field welcomed me, my daughter, and several of her cousins to the Capitol on Friday. We experienced a long delay waiting to get into our tour of the Capitol on Friday, and Jacob was kind enough to show us through a few areas of the Capitol Visitor Center.

When I asked Jacob what was the best thing to see in the Visitor Center he said "all of it, but let me show you a few special things." Jacob then proceeded to show us the gavel that Washington used when setting the cornerstone. It was a small thing, but the way Jacob presented it to my kids and nephews made them feel like they'd just stumbled across a great secret and that they had a really neat fact that many wouldn't know.

Thank you Jacob for taking your job seriously and making our visit special. It would be easy in the chaos of people to sit back and do nothing, but you proactively reached out to see how you could make our visit special...mission accomplished Jacob. Thanks again for helping to make it special.

Thanks,
Scott Baird & Family, Utah

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ms. Plemmons.

It is now an opportunity for each Member to ask you some questions about your work and how the experience is for the CVC and those that have the opportunity to come do those tours. I know this is your first time testifying before Congress, and we are honored to have you here with us today.

You stated in your opening remarks how it has changed, from the facilities, from the availability of restrooms, for the wait time. Certainly, it has been a pretty remarkable change, I believe, for our visitors that come in.

And I want to talk to you for a minute about that visitor experience. And I know you hope and attempt to mitigate any unnecessary wait times or inconveniences for our visiting public. And it is certainly their Capitol, the Capitol of the American people, and we are here to serve them.

To that end, what steps does the CVC take to minimize undue delays and wait times for Members and their offices, so that individuals and groups do not experience lengthy wait times as they attempt to see their Capitol? And what means has the CVC employed in recent years to attempt to do that?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Thank you for that question. This certainly has been a focus for us since we opened.

We continually monitor and evaluate the operation and make adjustments accordingly so that we can make the experience for all of our visitors exceptional. And we certainly work closely with our congressional partners to make that happen.

When the Visitor Center opened, we also started offering a reservation system online, which had not been available before to the public. And by doing that, that allowed folks to plan their experience in advance and make a reservation. And as part of our reservation system we are able to have different channels to manage our inventory.

And to answer your question about some of the ways that we accommodate our congressional offices with wait times, we do allow congressional offices to book reservations before anyone else has that opportunity. So that inventory is managed to give preference to our congressional offices.

We also realized pretty quickly that we needed a walkup line, because there were days where all the reservations had been taken and so everything was booked up. We needed to accommodate folks that were coming in and that had not made reservations. And as it works out, there are some folks that don't show up for their reservation, and so we are able to accommodate the folks that are waiting with that.

We do have two separate walkup lines. We have one for staff, because we wanted to appreciate their need to get their constituents who had shown up at their office that day onto a tour. And for many years, the staff would wait until we had tickets available, and we would call out their name and they would come and get the tickets to go on the tour.

Last year, we implemented a virtual queuing system, where the staff can get their telephone number and we will text them. And that way, instead of waiting, they can spend that time with their visitors, with their constituents, and take them around to Exhi-

bition Hall or Emancipation Hall or get a cup of coffee, that sort of thing.

The CHAIRMAN. That is great.

Ms. PLEMMONS. The inventory management is something that we have perfected over the years, and our goal is every day to get as many folks that want to come to the Capitol and have a tour in to do just that. And we manage our inventory carefully to make sure nothing goes to waste.

And so for 6 months out of the year when we are particularly busy, we are going above and beyond to make sure that we accommodate as many people as possible with an experience. And even if we don't have time to give a tour anymore, we do have some offerings in the afternoon where they can at least experience some of the Capitol.

The CHAIRMAN. And as far as the time for the film, what is the last time in the day that anyone can start a tour? What is that time?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Well, for a guide-led tour, it is at 3:20, but we have a 3:30 and a 3:40 time slot that is held exclusively for staff-led tours.

The CHAIRMAN. Got it. And as far as the improvements on communicating with staff, where they are not having to wait with constituents, how are you communicating with the congressional community what those best practices are? How do you get that word out to all the offices?

Ms. PLEMMONS. We have a couple of ways of doing that. One of our programs that we offer is CTT, which is Capitol Tour Training, and that is offered all year, every week. We have a 3½-hour training class, where our staff, any of the staff can come and learn the tour route, safety and security protocol, and also get information about everything that they are seeing.

So we have a book that we have put together that they can take with them and accurately tell the story of the Capitol and the history.

The CHAIRMAN. And I am just curious. When they do this training, obviously, you can't highlight everything. You are just trying to give them a working knowledge so that they are informed. Do you go back and review what they are going to be taught and change that periodically or update it?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Yes. We have over the years refined the training process with the goal of when they are done they can feel a confidence in going out with their constituents, the visitors, and taking them on a quality tour and having that visitor informed, involved, and inspired, which is our mission statement. We want to convey that to everyone and we want to give the tools to those staffers so that they can do the same.

We have two congressional liaisons that stay in touch with our offices all the time, sending them information about upcoming events or anything unusual happening.

We also have information sessions that we hold every year. We always have one right before the spring, because that is when it gets really busy and things are a little more difficult to navigate. And so we want to give everyone some helpful hints.

At those meetings, we have representatives from the House and Senate Sergeant at Arms and also the Capitol Police, who are our partners in sort of making it happen every day and maneuvering folks through the building while it is still being a working office building. So that balance can be challenging, and so we all need to work together to make that happen.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. And my time has expired.

I will now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Brady, for 5 minutes for more questions.

Mr. BRADY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Plemmons, you already answered my question about made in America, and I appreciate that. How is that going? How is it being executed? And the gift shop finances, have they been stabilizing over the years? I know at one point in time, I guess because of me, it wasn't stabilized too well. I made you clean the place out.

Ms. PLEMMONS. We do credit you with getting us on the right track for made in America. We are very proud to have all made in America items in our gift shops.

It was challenging to start out to find enough products that were made in America that were at a price that we could pass along to our visitors at an affordable price. But through the diligence of our staff, we have been able to find a lot of made in America products.

The stores right now, if you walk into them, are just beautiful, and they are stocked full of interesting things. And there is something for everyone, from our students with pencils and postcards, to tee shirts. We have books. And we have higher-end gift items as well.

So all of them are related to the Capitol and Congress in some way. We do have an educational focus in our gift shops as well as the rest of the CVC.

And so made in America and that educational focus and Congress and the Capitol has been our guiding force as we have gone out and developed products and also found items that are being made across the country. We have about 125 small businesses that we work with.

And so, to answer your question, that is all going very well, and we actually every year have had enough revenue to support our expenses. And last year was a great year for us. It was the best year we have ever had. We were 24 percent up over what we had been the previous year.

And so we are obviously buying things to sell in our gift shops that people want, and we are offering things at a price point that is affordable, and folks are taking a memento home with them.

Mr. BRADY. Thank you.

You talked about your successes. How about your biggest challenges? And how can we help on this Committee?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Well, our biggest challenge has been our budget and how we have been flat for several years. And serving more and more people takes more and more staff. And so we have been seeing an increase in visitors, but a decrease in the number of staff as we have tried to meet our budgetary guidelines.

So recently, in fiscal year 2018, we did receive some small increase in our salary dollars, which we very much appreciate, to be

able to fully staff our team so that we can respond to all of those visitor needs.

Most of those salary dollars went to our education department, and we have developed all sorts of wonderful programs. I saw a preview yesterday of some of our cart programs, which we take the carts around to the different areas in Exhibition Hall and Emancipation Hall, and we engage our visitors and talk to them more in depth about different topics. And having the salary dollars to fund our educators really enables us to make a big difference in that experience that the visitor is having.

We are aging, and so our equipment and our facility is in need of change and repair. And so those are just ongoing expenses and maintenance that you would expect to have in any facility.

One thing that we have on the horizon that we are very excited about is our Exhibition Hall and redesigning that area. It was intended to be around for about 10 years before it needed a refresh, and so we have been excitedly preparing for what is next. And it is going to be an environment that is even more welcoming and more educational and engaging than what we have right now.

Mr. BRADY. You know, that is an amazing building, and every time I go there I get lost. And as I am walking around, I figure there is something in me, I feel a little stupid, which is easy for me at times. But I look around, I see my colleagues, and I find out they are lost, too.

But my point is, your staff is extremely, extremely helpful. They probably whisper, "Here comes this guy again, don't know where he is going." But every time they are always helping and they are extremely helpful, walk me where I have to go from time to time and sometimes walk me back out to get back on the House floor.

So that is a testament to your leadership, and I appreciate it and I thank you. Thanks for being here. Thank you for your testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Brady.

The Chair will now recognize the Vice Chair of the Committee, Mr. Davis, for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Brady. You can tell he is on his way out. He is brutally honest that he still gets lost at the CVC.

We are going to miss you, buddy. You are a good man and thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. And let the record note he did not say he was going to miss the Chairman. But that is okay.

Mr. DAVIS. I will not correct the record.

Gregg knows that he will be dearly missed. This Committee is going to have a big loss with both of them going away. A lot of experience and a lot of class. And I think that is something that all of us, in a bipartisan way, throughout our Conference and throughout the House, we really agree. So thank you both.

Now, can I get a couple extra minutes to question the witness?

The CHAIRMAN. You have 30 seconds.

Mr. DAVIS. You know, I was a staffer when they started building the CVC. So I can remember all the discussion in all the Hill newspapers, and also discussions about how long it may have taken,

how much it was going to cost. But in the end, look at what is there.

And I remember specifically that there was a lot of concern for Members of Congress at the time about how do we utilize this space not just to establish a focal point for tours and tourists coming in, but how can we utilize it for Members of Congress and our teams to have meetings. And I know one of the additions of that scope was to increase those opportunities.

Along these same lines, can you tell me, the auditorium and the atrium, I already know they are wonderful places for films and events for Congress to utilize. And I really appreciate being able to utilize some of your meeting spaces for constituent meetings.

And also it is great to be able to get down there to do some things with our, you know, be it closed top secret meetings, briefings that we as Members of Congress get. I always enjoy having an electrical outlet there to charge my phone, while I can't take it into those classified briefings. It always amazes me, it doesn't matter if I took it in or not, I know what is happening in the briefings when I get out, because somebody else is tweeting it out.

But because we appreciate your spaces so much, can you tell me how often the auditorium, the atrium, and other spaces are used for films and other events? And can you tell me how often they are utilized by the House and the Senate?

Ms. PLEMMONS. I can. Thank you for bringing those up. We are very proud of those spaces. They are updated and full of amenities to make sure that whatever meetings are held there go off without a hitch.

We have about 800 events a year in those spaces, and this would be the Congressional Auditorium and the two Congressional Meeting Rooms. And the atrium is sort of right there in front of the auditorium.

Mr. DAVIS. Right.

Ms. PLEMMONS. We use the auditorium about 50 percent of the time. So, please, book more experiences in the auditorium. We have that available 6 days a week. We also offer catering for that particular area. So if you had an event in the atrium, you could have catering along with your meeting in the Congressional Auditorium.

Mr. DAVIS. So the utilization rate of the auditorium is about 50 percent?

Ms. PLEMMONS. In the auditorium, yes.

Mr. DAVIS. And the atrium, what would you estimate?

Ms. PLEMMONS. It is about 50 percent.

Mr. DAVIS. Fifty percent. And the same with Emancipation Hall?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Uh-huh.

Mr. DAVIS. Okay.

Ms. PLEMMONS. Now, Emancipation Hall is a little bit different. We utilize that for our bigger events, such as Gold Medal ceremonies and that sort of thing. And we use that about two to three times a year, on average, for those big events.

Mr. DAVIS. But you have to kind of keep all the tourists out while you are doing those events.

Ms. PLEMMONS. Yes.

Mr. DAVIS. Okay.

Ms. PLEMMONS. So we have massaged that over the years to try to give as much access as possible. And depending on the time of day that the event is occurring, we can sometimes bring people in that morning while we are setting up and still give them a tour and the full experience. Sometimes we do have to cancel tours when we are having an event in Exhibition Hall.

Mr. DAVIS. How many times a year, how many special events did you say with Emancipation Hall a year?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Emancipation Hall, we have two to three a year.

Mr. DAVIS. Two or three a year.

Ms. PLEMMONS. In 2015, we had eight, because we had the restoration going on in the rotunda.

Mr. DAVIS. So only about two or three times a year you have the disruptions with the tours. And there are other ways for us, as Members of Congress, to be able to take people on tours, just not going through the CVC and Emancipation Hall, right?

Ms. PLEMMONS. And we do facilitate that through the tunnels, where we ticket folks there and help them find their way to the Capitol to go into the rotunda and Statuary Hall and that sort of thing.

Mr. DAVIS. Did you help Mr. Brady find his way?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Absolutely. We showed him to the gift shop.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very, very much, Ms. Plemmons.

And thank you again, Bob and Gregg. You have been great to serve under.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much, Mr. Davis. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair will now recognize the gentleman from Maryland, Mr. Raskin, for 5 minutes.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Chairman, thank you so much. And I am not going to join the chorus singing your praises and that of Mr. Brady, because we still have another, what, 7 months to go. So I don't want any kind of premature encomiums for you guys.

Thank you so much for your testimony.

So 50 percent usage rate, is that right, for the atrium and for the auditorium? And what percentage is it on the weeks and during the weekends, would you say?

Ms. PLEMMONS. It is almost all Tuesday through Thursday is our big—when folks are in session.

Mr. RASKIN. So if you add up the whole week, it is actually less than 50 percent if you count—

Ms. PLEMMONS. We were counting Monday through Friday as availability.

Mr. RASKIN. Got you.

Ms. PLEMMONS. And then, of that, we use it about 50 percent of the time.

Mr. RASKIN. I am interested in the weekend just because I am a local Member. My district touches D.C. And I am just curious, what are the rules about use of the space during the weekend? Is it possible for groups to obtain—

Ms. PLEMMONS. It is available on Saturday. We are open on Saturdays at the CVC. We are closed on Sundays. And so we typically do not host events on Sundays unless it is a congressional direc-

tive, and we are happy to do that. We have a ceremony coming up in June with King Kamehameha that is on a Sunday.

Mr. RASKIN. But for Saturdays, ordinarily it is available by way of the usual reservation process through Members and so on?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Right.

Mr. RASKIN. Great.

So do you have a visitor feedback process that you are using to analyze the use of the space and the facilities?

Ms. PLEMMONS. We do have visitor feedback systems in a number of different areas. Our visitor surveys are primarily done for folks that are on tour or visiting Exhibition Hall or something like that.

We do ask our participants that utilize the space in the Congressional Auditorium and the Congressional Meeting Rooms for their feedback, and ask them to rate our service and how we are doing and what we can do to be better service providers.

Mr. RASKIN. Can you describe the current ticketing system and how that is working?

Ms. PLEMMONS. I can. We do have a reservation system, as I mentioned earlier. And so ideally, a person would go online and book their reservation in advance. And then they would come a little ahead of time on the day of their reservation and come through the screening process and then go to the information desk and pick up their ticket. And then they get in line for the theater, and then a guide or a staffer will take them on a tour of the Capitol.

The ticketing process itself, once that reservation is made, once we have booked up those reservations for a day, then we tell folks, just come on in and we are going to accommodate you if we possibly can.

And so that is where our inventory management comes in, where we are constantly watching to see how things are flowing. And if we have someone that does not show up for their reservation, then we get those tickets to the people who are standing there. And we do that in order of how long they have been waiting.

Mr. RASKIN. Do you know what the typical wait time is for someone who just shows up like that?

Ms. PLEMMONS. It really depends on the day. The 2 weeks around Easter are traditionally our incredibly busy time.

Mr. RASKIN. We have noticed that.

Ms. PLEMMONS. And we did have one day where waits were up to 2 hours this past Easter, but that is not the norm. Normally, it would be no more than 20 minutes or so during our busy season. Six months out of the year, there is no wait at all.

Mr. RASKIN. Great. All right. Well, thank you so much for your hard work, and my constituents certainly love it. So you have got some happy customers in the Eighth Congressional District of Maryland.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair will now recognize the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Walker, for 5 minutes.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I do not have to wait for the next few months to offer my accolades to your character, integrity. And part of your legacy here will

be the honor with which you have handled yourselves, and I think that is across the aisle. So thank you for your service.

Ms. Plemmons, you mentioned earlier that because of the age there were some things that needed change and repair, which made me think those are some things that I think Vice Chair Rodney Davis can relate to at his growing age and about needing some changes and repair, but that is a different story. As our catcher, we will talk about that some other time.

Ms. Plemmons, I believe Exhibition Hall is a tremendous asset to the Capitol Visitor Center. It is arguably the only museum space in our Nation dedicated to American political history, of which Congress is the epicenter of course.

Can you explain for us the key features that contribute to the functioning of Exhibition Hall? For example, how often does the temporary exhibit change? What type of programming have you historically done in the Exhibition Hall? And have you changed or expanded the programming in recent years? Could you take just a minute and address those?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Sure.

Thank you for asking about Exhibition Hall. It is a great space, and it is very interesting and engaging. It is a little dark, and we need to correct that with our redesign to be more welcoming.

But it does offer a number of artifacts, interactives. There are films, touchable models. We are telling the story of Congress. It is, as you mentioned, the only exhibition in the world that tells the story of the United States Congress and the Capitol.

And we also have two theaters, one is on the House side and one is on the Senate side, and the areas are made to look similar to the Chambers. And we show a film that explains how Congress works, how the House works and how the Senate works.

We also have a rotating exhibit, and that does occur every 6 months. So a tremendous investment in that. We have a working group, a content working group that includes the House and Senate curators and historians, folks from the Archives and the Library of Congress. They all work together to come up with a quality exhibit that we refresh every 6 months.

Mr. WALKER. Sure. I think you referenced kind of the redesign of Exhibition Hall in your comments. What was the purpose of the necessity of those needs? Or, in your opinion, why did you think that was necessary? And can you also address where you are in the process?

Ms. PLEMMONS. Sure. We had always known that the intent was to refresh the Hall after 10 years. And so as we started to approach our 10-year anniversary, we started to plan. And part of that planning included surveying our visitors to find out what they were looking for in their experience.

And so we wanted to change that environment to be more welcoming and inviting, the physical space, to make it something that would draw folks in; and then also to respond to the needs of our visitors and help them understand the impact that Congress has on them every day, and also what their role is in the democratic process.

So that is our focus.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you. Thanks for articulating that.

A little bit of a longer question, to preface it, but I want to get your response on this. The Capitol Visitor Center currently features our national motto, "In God We Trust," engraved at its entrance; the Pledge of Allegiance, including the words "One Nation under God," that is engraved at the entrance of the Congressional Auditorium. "In God We Trust" is seen in your mini-House Chamber replica, as it is on our House floor.

As part of the redesign, since we are talking on that, do you anticipate any of these important stories or features of our congressional history and political life being altered, changed, or even removed?

Ms. PLEMMONS. We intend to keep all of those as part of telling the story of Congress and our religious heritage. And I will say that—put a caveat in there that some of the items are on loan, such as the two Bibles that we have. They are very important and part of telling the story of that particular time.

However, we do abide by the guidelines of our lenders. And so if there are objects that might need to have a rest, not be on display for a while to preserve them—and, you know, Bibles are paper—and so there could be a scenario where the lenders say: We want to take these off of display.

But our intent is to include those and everything else that you mentioned, and to continue to weave those stories in, as appropriate, as we tell the story of the history of Congress and the Capitol.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Ms. Plemmons.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

We want to thank you for your time today and for what you do to make the Capitol the special place that it is.

There is nothing more meaningful to us, as Members, than seeing first-time visitors to the United States Capitol and to see that interest that they have, whether it is an adult or a group of young people from a school. It is something unique and special, and it is the center of our democracy. And so I thank you for that work that you are doing.

And as this goes through and the days go by, and you have issues or needs or things that you are looking at, or redesigns or reengineering, don't assume that we know about those needs. And please know that we are here to work together on this to continue to have it as the most incredible place to visit in Washington, D.C.

And we thank you for your time today.

Without objection, all Members will have 5 legislative days to submit to the Chair additional written questions for the witness, which we will forward if any are forthcoming, and ask you to answer as promptly as you can so that those answers can be made a part of the record.

[The information follows:]

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

**U.S. Capitol Visitor Center
Responses to Questions for the Record Submitted by the Majority
June 5, 2018**

- 1. How many special events take place annually in Emancipation Hall? Does CVC management consider these special events to be a significant detractor from the visitor experience and visitors' expectations in terms of unexpected closures? Do special events enhance or detract from the mission of the CVC? Should we consider adjusting or modifying the CVC Special Events policies?**

The use of Emancipation Hall for any event requires approval by a joint resolution of Congress. This stipulation has the effect of limiting the number of events held annually. Thus far, in 2018, two events have been held in the space, and only two events were held in 2017. Emancipation Hall served as the site of many more events during September 2015 to September 2016 due to the Dome restoration project. The restoration required installation of scaffolding in the Rotunda, significantly reducing the number of people who could attend events in the Rotunda. In 2015, Emancipation Hall served as the site of eight events and three were held there in 2016.

Most visitors understand that the U.S. Capitol is a working building. The CVC website includes a notice that tours or CVC hours of operations may be altered due to congressional business. When tours are affected by special events, the CVC emails advance notices to those holding reservations, which includes steps that may be taken to reschedule a tour. The CVC also works with its congressional partners to minimize the time Emancipation Hall is closed. For example, to minimize disruptions to tours when there is a special event in the afternoon, the CVC and its partners have developed procedures that allow tours to proceed in the morning prior to closing the upper floors to public and congressional tours.

- 2. What is the financial health of the two gift shops at the CVC? Are they successful? How are you measuring success? How do you forecast what visitors might like seasonally or perhaps in collaboration with your exhibits and programs?**

The CVC has two gift shops that have been operating since the opening of the Visitor Center. The shops are the "North Gift Shop" and "South Gift Shop." The shops are considered an enriching component of the visitor's experience at the U.S. Capitol. Located on the CVC upper level, the North and South Gift Shops offer unique keepsakes related to the U.S. Capitol and Congress. Featured is a wide range of products including books, jewelry and accessories, adult and youth apparel, prints and stationery items. Each shop offers a selection of books, educational materials and collectable gifts that appeal to both adults and children. Items offered in the shops are designed to increase understanding of Congress and the history of the U.S. U.S. Capitol. Visitors can select products that reflect key themes featured in Exhibition Hall, seasonal and current events, as well as what they see on their tour. In the spring, the shops feature a collection of cherry blossom products and switch to patriotic red white and blue items for summer.

The CVC is proud that its gift shops offer only merchandise made in the United States and represents the highest standards of quality and craftsmanship. The CVC is also pleased that efforts to contract with small businesses to produce items exclusively for the shops has proven to be highly successful. The shops currently carry products supplied by 125 small businesses from around the country.

The Gift Shops have consistently exceeded sales records from previous years, a direct result of continually working to enhance both the quality and variety of offerings. The gift shops celebrated fiscal year 2017 with record breaking sales up 23.6 percent over fiscal year 2016.

Processes are in place to ensure the shops operate efficiently. A recently installed new point of sales system enhances service to visitors and securely processes records and financial data. The system offers upgraded reporting and supports evaluation and future planning.

- 3. Is the CVC restaurant profitable and what is done with the revenue? Also, have you been able to implement any measures that have lowered costs for your consumers and made the experience more financially reasonable for the families and groups that often come here from far distances and often as a once-in-their-life experience? What are your most popular entrée items and what are you doing to reduce food waste?**

The goal of the CVC Restaurant (U.S. Capitol Cafe), as envisioned by the U.S. Capitol Preservation Commission during the development of operating procedures for the CVC, is to provide quality food service primarily to visitors to the U.S. U.S. Capitol with a range of selections that appeal to visitors of all ages and demographics. The Cafe is situated in a unique environment. Accordingly, the appearance of the restaurant and its business model are not based on a standard staff cafeteria-like structure. Rather, the CVC contract for providing food service to visitors to the U.S. Capitol states that pricing is intended to "be comparable with menu prices at... Washington, D.C. area cultural institutions," such as the Smithsonian museums and the Newseum. Since opening in 2008, the Restaurant has served 2.5 million visitors, annually serving an average 257,000 visitors.

Distinctive to the U.S. Capitol is that students make up a significant percentage of annual visitors. In recognition that the CVC has a responsibility to provide food service to students, a voucher program was created that enables these young visitors to enjoy an affordable and healthy meal at the U.S. Capitol. Vouchers are ordered in advance and are available to groups of 25 or more. Since the voucher program began in 2008, the number of annual restaurant meal vouchers sales has more than doubled. Also since 2008, the price of voucher meals for students has remained essentially flat. Holding the line on the price of vouchers has been a conscious decision by the CVC to help ensure that young people receive the nutrition they need during a visit to the U.S. Capitol. The price of a youth voucher meal remained at \$6.00 for over six years and was raised to only \$6.50 in 2015. (Vouchers are also available for \$10 and \$14.)

CVC staff review pricing annually to help ensure that the Cafe is offering a selection of products that appeal to current trends in the industry, as well as a range of price points. Mindful that many families touring the U.S. Capitol take advantage of the accessibility of the Cafe the CVC offers kids meals. These child-size portions are offered at lower price points. In addition to basic options, the Cafe has expanded offerings to include items that support current themes in Exhibition Hall and seasonal events such as cherry blossom and select holidays. Regardless of the season or the offerings, the most popular entrée items year round are chicken tenders, the salad bar, small items such as a slice of pizza and items from the grill. Visitors also select from a variety of cleverly designed and appealing desserts.

The Cafe continues to produce strong sales. A portion of these profits from the Cafe are deposited in the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center Revolving Fund, Miscellaneous Receipts Account. These funds are used to help offset capital requirements for the upkeep of the CVC.

Regarding food waste, portion sizes are monitored, which helps identify portions of particular items that may be too large and are being thrown away. Food waste is gathered and placed into a pulper. The slurry created by the pulper becomes compostable material that is proved to a contractor for use, which is primarily agriculture related.

- 4. Our nation's capital is full of institutions and facilities that showcase American history and politics and attempt to do so in an engaging and inspiring way. Does the CVC collaborate with other entities to enhance its programming or reach out to educators who by turn will reach generations of students? And internally, how does the CVC collaborate with our historians and curators here in the House and Senate and perhaps in other partnering institutions? How would you like to increase the educational reach of the CVC?**

As stated in the CVC's Strategic and Operations Plan, the CVC's mission is "Working together for Congress to inform, involve and inspire every visitor to the United States U.S. Capitol." This statement conveys the CVC's goal to provide a welcoming and educational environment for visitors to learn about the House, the Senate and the legislative process, as well as the history of the art and architecture of the U.S. Capitol. To help achieve this goal, the CVC collaborates with teachers, House, Senate and AOC historians and curators, representatives of the National Archives and Library of Congress and with the U.S. U.S. Capitol Historical Society, among other institutions. The CVC also collaborates with the U.S. Botanic Garden on education programs, such as public walking tours and is developing teacher professional development opportunities.

In addition to permanent exhibits on display in Exhibition Hall that tell the institutional history of Congress, rotating temporary exhibits explore the role of the Senate and the House of Representatives in pivotal moments in American history. These exhibits are the product of a collaboration by historians, archivists, and curators working under the direction and in support of the CVC's Exhibits and Education Division.

Each exhibit begins with the CVC Exhibits Curator choosing a period or concept to explore. The Curator develops the exhibit theme in consultation with a content working group that includes staff from the Center for Legislative Archives, the Library of Congress, and the historical community of the U.S. Capitol, including the House and Senate Historical Offices and the House and Senate Curator's Office. Once the team develops the themes, historical documents and objects drawn from curatorial collections are secured on loan from the Center for Legislative Archives and the Library of Congress, and on occasion, other institutions across the country.

The CVC's Exhibits and Education Division actively seeks the expertise of teachers in developing programming for students and provides professional development opportunities for teachers. There are two primary methods used to connect with teachers:

- **Teacher Advisory Group**

This special group of CVC volunteers includes educators from across the country that convene via teleconference three to four times a year to discuss topics and issues connecting educational programming with curriculum. The advice and insights gleaned from this group provides valuable feedback to the CVC's Education staff in developing new programs and resources for students and teachers.

- **Teacher Workshops**

Offered two to three times a year, Teacher Workshops at the CVC allow educators to pursue topics related to the U.S. Capitol and Congress and explore with their peers ways to incorporate these subjects into their classroom instruction. CVC staff arrange for presentations from experts, including House and Senate historians and curators and educators from the Botanic Garden, as well as special tours of the U.S. Capitol. Each session includes a look at primary resources related to the topic.

The CVC is pleased to partner with the U.S. Capitol Historical Society (USCHS). Through public programs and a local-focus school program, the Exhibits and Education Division and USCHS have successfully collaborated on efforts that align with one another's missions, capabilities, resources, and audiences. In 2017, the CVC and USCHS began a new partnership which greatly increased the Exhibits and Education Division's ability to serve student audiences. From November 1, 2017 through early March 2018, the CVC participated in USCHS's student program, We the People, which provides DC public and charter school students with an in-depth, in-person look at the three branches of Government. Over the course of this first partnership season, 31 programs brought 1,087 students and teachers to the CVC through We the People.

Also in March with the opening of "Congress and the Separation of Powers," the CVC expanded its partnership with USCHS. An evening reception for congressional staff, CVC stakeholders and USCHS members offered an after-hours look at the new exhibit.

The CVC continues to explore new partnership opportunities with like institutions to increase our reach for all audiences, but especially for students and teachers. These partnerships provide efficient ways to expand the impact of programming, and the CVC hopes to continue these efforts in the coming years.

5. In recent years your funding has remained essentially flat. Do you have the resources you need to carry out your mission? With your increase in visitation, are you concerned you won't be able to meet that need without an increase in your appropriation? What steps have you taken to stretch your appropriated dollars to meet the increased demand? What if any additional budgetary flexibility of some kind would be helpful in managing your resources and mission?

A. Essentially flat appropriated funding has made it increasingly difficult to ensure that the CVC has the ability to meet expectations of an ever-increasing number of visitors, simply because there are not sufficient resources to remain fully staffed. Some 200,000 more visitors entered the Capitol through the CVC in fiscal year 2017 than in fiscal year 2016. Welcoming more visitors without being fully staffed required a great deal of creativity and flexibility on behalf of management and front-line staff. The CVC is pleased to report that despite the shortage of front-line personnel, every effort was made to provide world-class customer service through a range of adjustments to staffing assignments. For example, the number of frontline staff was reduced at the entrance of the CVC who offer wayfinding and processing tour passes. The number of staff was also reduced in positions that facilitate visitors who have obtained passes and are beginning the tour process. The reduced number of staff has impacted the level of service that can be provided and operational efficiency. The CVC's volunteers were also engaged to support Visitor Services staff.

The CVC has devised a staffing model to reduce the number of full-time year-round Visitor Services staff and to employ full-time, temporary and part time staff during periods of peak visitation. These full-time temporary staff are brought on board in early February to prepare for the busy spring season and serve until mid-August. A similar staffing model has been implemented by the gift shops. This has proven to be cost effective, but also requires significant coordination by the CVC to recruit potential candidates, complete the selection/security clearance process and to train the new employees in time to meet operational needs.

In addition to affecting personnel requirements, years of flat appropriations have made it difficult to keep pace with equipment requirements. Technology has evolved tremendously since the CVC opened in 2008, and a significant number of expensive pieces of equipment used in Emancipation Hall, Exhibition Hall and throughout the CVC have simply come to the end of or outlived their life cycle. The CVC's Audio/Visual and IT staff have done an exceptional job over the years of scavenging for replacement parts to keep obsolete equipment operating beyond their life expectancy. However, projectors, projection screens, signage panels and other related equipment became irreparable and had to be replaced. While the CVC has drawn on its Revolving Fund to help cover the cost of replacing worn out and obsolete equipment, new technology that is also much

more energy efficient require a sustained profile of annual programmed funding. While several pieces of equipment have been replaced, the need to acquire substitutes is unending. Given the experience of nearly 10 years of operation, the CVC anticipates that some of its more expensive equipment will have to be replaced every three to five years.

In order to maintain world-class service to visitors to the U.S. Capitol, the CVC would benefit from an increased funding profile in order to maintain adequate staffing levels, meet equipment maintenance and refresh requirements, and invest in modernization.

6. **As you know, sometimes Legislative Branch agencies and entities have been granted authority to create and manage revolving funds as a way to increase their resource capabilities without needing further appropriations from Congress. Please remind the committee: does the CVC have any revolving funds? If so, how many and for what purposes are they used?**

The U.S. Capitol Visitor Center Act of 2008 (PL 110-437) established a Revolving Fund with two separate accounts for deposit of receipts arising from gift shop operations and for deposit of receipts from restaurant and catering sales.

- **Gift Shops Account**

Cash receipts generated from the Gift Shops have been used exclusively for replenishing stock for resale and for purchasing supplies needed to support retail operations. Merchandising practices have resulted in cash receipts continuing to exceed the cost of replenishing stock, purchasing supplies, replacing equipment and store maintenance.

- **Miscellaneous Receipts Account**

All net profits from the food service operations and all commissions received from the contractor for food service operations are deposited in the Miscellaneous Receipts Account. With the approval of the CVC's Oversight Committees, the Committee on House Administration and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, the Revolving Fund has been used for projects such as replacement of malfunctioning and outdated equipment in Emancipation Hall and in Exhibition Hall.

7. **Please explain the key features that contribute to the functioning of Exhibition Hall. For example, how often does the temporary exhibit change? What type of programming have you historically done in Exhibition Hall? Have you changed or expanded that programming in recent years?**

A. Exhibition Hall is home to *E Pluribus Unum-Out of Many One*, an exhibition that tells the story of Congress and the U.S. Capitol. Documents from the Library of Congress and National Archives illustrate the impact that Congress has had on the history of our nation and the lives of its citizens. Exhibits at the entrance to Exhibition Hall are rotated every

six months to further illustrate how the work of Congress shapes the direction of the nation and directly impacts the citizenry.

Since opening in 2008, the CVC has presented an increasing number of public programs in Exhibition Hall. In recent years, staff have successfully used the House and Senate Theater spaces within Exhibition Hall for a variety of programs, from first person interpretation, to film-based programs. The CVC has experimented with program formats and gathered feedback from visitors, testing how various spaces in Exhibition Hall and Emancipation Hall function in support of programming. This experimentation has been instrumental in planning for the upcoming Exhibition Hall Redesign project and has informed both the programming that will occur during the period of time when Exhibition Hall will be closed to the public as well as the design of interactive and educational experiences in the new exhibit space. Among the programs recently offered:

- Family Thursdays, which typically combines an educational presentation with a hands-on activity geared to children seven and older.
- Talking Points, in which a subject matter expert such as a curator or archivist from one of our partner institutions discusses a topic related to the exhibit.
- Seen On Screen, in which a CVC staff member or visiting expert hosts a screening of an archival film, establishing the historical context and tying the film to exhibit content. Staff members then invite visitors to respond to what they have seen.
- Fact or Fiction Fridays, invites visitors to contrast and compare historic documents to events presented in video clips from educational and classic movies.
- History Jargon Jeopardy, features a game show-like format with questions focused on the history of Congress and the U.S. Capitol.

8. What educational programs are currently being offered at the CVC? How are these programs helping visitors better understand the role of Congress?

The CVC, through its Exhibits and Education Division, continues to offer a series of educational and public programs. Visitors can choose from a variety of lessons about Congress and the U.S. Capitol that go beyond the traditional U.S. Capitol tour. These include recurring programs for visitors tied to the rotating exhibits Heritage Months, and significant cultural events or anniversaries. A range of programs tailored for students is also offered. All of these programs strive to go beyond didactic presentation methods to involve visitors in the learning process, so that they can form connections between their own experiences and the work of the legislative branch. Included among the many offerings:

- Family Thursdays typically combine an educational presentation with a hands-on activity geared to children seven and older.
- “Encounters” positions interpreters in Exhibition Hall and Emancipation Hall who use hands-on objects to tell a variety of six-minute stories. Topics include how enslaved laborers helped build the U.S. Capitol and how ordinary citizens inspired Congress to write new legislation.

- Hooks and Artifacts uses artifacts and questioning strategies to tell stories and pique visitors' curiosity about the history of Congress and the U.S. Capitol as well as the visitor experience at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center.
- Student Programs, which run from October through early March, offer three options: Art Appreciators, U.S. Capitol Art, and Environment Matters. These engage students from elementary through high school in activities and discussions aimed at revealing the legislative process and works of art at the U.S. Capitol.
- What's Happening in the Chambers provides information about the functions of the two Chambers.
- Specialty Tours include Halls of the Senate that enables visitors to see the beautifully decorated Senate corridors of the U.S. Capitol in an intimate look at the work of Constantino Brumidi. Freedom Fighters in the U.S. Capitol Collection reveals the lives of ordinary Americans whose extraordinary actions changed the course of the nation's civil rights history. Outdoor Tours of the U.S. Capitol Grounds allows visitors to see how the U.S. Capitol has expanded over time and learn the history behind the expansions.

9. What are the restrictions placed on the CVC regarding the number of visitors that may be provided tours of the U.S. Capitol at any given time? What is the authority for these restrictions, and how are they imposed?

The Safety, Fire and Environmental Programs Division of the Architect of the U.S. Capitol determines the number of individuals that can safely be in the U.S. Capitol at any given time. To access the U.S. Capitol, timed tour passes are required and must be worn by all visitors on staff-led and CVC Guide-led tours. The timed tour passes are required as a way of controlling the number of people in the U.S. Capitol for safety and security purposes. The number of tour passes issued at any given time complies with direction given by the Safety, Fire and Environmental Programs Division.

10. How does the CVC work in collaboration with the House Sergeant at Arms and the U.S. Capitol Police? Is there anything you would like to improve in these relationships? What is the average security-related entrance wait time at the CVC?

The CVC has developed a successful and collaborative partnership with the House Sergeant at Arms and the U.S. Capitol Police (USCP). For example, to manage the large flow of visitors entering the CVC as efficiently as possible, the CVC worked with USCP to develop a system that allows full operation of magnetometers in the screening areas during the busiest times of the year. The number of magnetometers that are open and the number of USCP officers required to staff them are reduced during low periods of visitation. During peak periods when between 10,000 -15,000 people a day visit the U.S. Capitol, the longest wait time to clear security into the facility averages only 20-30 minutes. There is virtually no waiting at the entrance during off peak periods.

Given the heightened security necessary to protect the U.S. Capitol and those who work in it, the CVC and USCP have collaborated to provide safety and security training to CVC staff. CVC staff attend classes on active shooter training, evacuation procedures and

shelter in place due to inclement weather, internal relocation, suspicious packages, and more.

Many hours of cooperation and preparation are required to ensure the success of special events, ranging from the State of the Union Address to Gold Medal Ceremonies. The CVC works very closely with the USCP and the Sergeants staff, along with other partners, to plan and to support special events. The CVC's Visitor Services staff provides wayfinding and assistance to the Office of Accessibly Services at virtually every event held in the U.S. Capitol.

To support the CVC's U.S. Capitol Tour Training program, the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms staff provide a presentation on safety and security during every class. The Sergeants staff help educate congressional staff and interns about safety issues such as how to reach U.S. Capitol Police in an emergency, where areas of refuge are located and how to exit the building if there is a security incident.

11. Does USCP collaborate with the CVC in controlling the flow of visitors into the U.S. Capitol? Please provide details and any recommendations for improving that collaboration?

U.S. Capitol Police officers are posted at the base of the CVC escalators leading to the Crypt to monitor timed tour passes. The USCP are expected to ensure individuals are wearing valid passes and to ensure congressional staff are leading tours groups within the set limit of up to 15 visitors. Due to safety and security requirements, all congressional staff and CVC Guides are expected to follow the tour route as approved by the U.S. Capitol Police Board. USCP officers posted in the Rotunda and at other locations on the public tour route may direct unescorted visitors, staff-led groups without timed tour passes, staff-led groups in areas off the approved tour route and staff-led tour groups exceeding the 15-visitor limit back to the CVC.

12. What is the purpose of timed CVC Guide-led tours and how does that process correspond to staff-led tours? For example, if staff-led tours bypass the Orientation Film, does this have any impact on the timing or flow of tours into the U.S. Capitol?

The CVC functions as a means of adhering to the capacity limits for safety and security in the U.S. Capitol that are set by the Safety, Fire and Environmental Programs Division (SFEP) of the Architect of the U.S. Capitol. A timed pass system is used to manage the flow of visitors from the CVC to rooms on the tour route. Tours led by the CVC's professional Guides begin in one of the orientation theaters with a 13-minute film. "*Out of Many, One*" which serves not only to orient visitors to the U.S. Capitol and Congress, but also plays a role in helping to maintain a safe flow of individuals to begin their tour. Staff are encouraged to incorporate the film into their tours, but they have the option of bypassing the film. This option may be beneficial to offices in accommodating guests with limited time, but bypassing the film also bypasses the timing mechanism. This can have the effect of exceeding the number of visitors per time period that are expected to enter the first and second floors of the U.S. Capitol. All visitors, whether on a CVC

Guide-led tour or staff-led tour, must acquire and wear the timed pass stickers while on tour in the U.S. Capitol. Some staff will use destination badges, which are intended for use only to escort guests to specific locations in the U.S. Capitol and are not authorized for giving tours, to by-pass the timed tour pass process entirely. This misuse of escort badges has as much or even more of a negative impact on adhering to meet the directives provided by SFEP

13. The CVC is approaching its 10-year anniversary. Given the many operational adjustments and technology upgrades made during the past 10 years, what do you foresee as operational challenges and keeping up with the public's expectations that the CVC will face in the next 10 years?

The CVC is honored by its ability to serve the congressional community through hosting events in its meeting spaces. However, keeping abreast of rapidly changing technology in order to meet the needs of customers is an ongoing and costly challenge. The CVC's Audio/Visual and IT teams are constantly on the lookout for ways to upgrade the spaces to meet requests from offices. While current capabilities include Skype, teleconferencing, live streaming and other means of communication, no doubt many other technological advances are forthcoming. Customers will expect the CVC to offer those new technologies to augment their meetings.

Similar challenges will come from keeping information and technology updated in Exhibition Hall, even as the refresh project will greatly advance the existing offerings. The CVC is also committed to providing international visitors with more electronic tools to enrich their tour of the U.S. Capitol. Providing this service will mean contracting for new and expensive audio translation devices. Along with keeping up with the current and emerging technologies, the CVC will need to ensure its IT and AV systems are secure.

14. Please describe your current redesign of Exhibition Hall. Why did you feel it was necessary? Where are you in the process? How long will the redesign last? What if any contractors have been utilized and how were they selected? When will Exhibition Hall close and when will it reopen? What are the most significant changes visitors will see and experience in the redesigned space? How will the content of Exhibition Hall change? What is your estimated cost of the project? How is the CVC managing this cost?

Plans are under development for the refurbishment of Exhibition Hall. Initially built as a semi-permanent exhibition with a lifespan of ten years, Exhibition Hall now needs multimedia and exhibit upgrades to keep pace with the evolving needs and expectations of the U.S. Capitol's average 2.5 million annual visitors. The redesigned exhibition will convey the significance of Congress to everyday life, the role of citizens in a democratic process, and the evolving understanding of "We the People." The CVC intends, through this redesign effort, to create an exhibit that is engaging, welcoming and meaningful for visitors; a space where visitors can learn about the history of this institution and be inspired by what they see and do here. After a review of qualifications of Architecture

and Engineering contractors, the AOC selected the Architecture and Engineering firm, HGA, and the exhibit design firm, Gallagher & Associates, to work collaboratively with staff across the U.S. Capitol to reimagine Exhibition Hall. In addition to an exhibit space focused on the history of Congress and the U.S. Capitol, Exhibition Hall will feature a new temporary exhibition gallery and a hands-on learning space for visitors of all ages and educational groups. The CVC anticipates closing Exhibition Hall for refurbishment in 2019 and aims to reopen the exhibit prior to the presidential inauguration in 2021. The hypothetical costs (based on historic costs) are estimated at approximately \$15 million. The cost of the refurbishment will be covered through the CVC Revolving Fund.

15. Your Visitors Services Division and staff are on the forefront of the visitor experience when the American people and our international visitors visit Congress and the U.S. Capitol. Please describe what characteristics you are looking for when you select an individual to serve as a Visitor Guide or Visitor Assistant.

The mission of the CVC is “Working together for Congress to inform, involve and inspire every visitor to the United States U.S. Capitol.” To that end, the CVC recruits individuals who have experience in and appreciate the importance of customer service and, for Visitor Guides, who also have experience in public speaking or in giving tours. Individuals must display a positive attitude and welcoming demeanor. Although a background in history is beneficial, more important to the CVC is that potential Visitor Guides and Visitor Assistants are keenly interested in and willing to learn the history of the U.S. Capitol and Congress.

16. What is the CVC’s biggest challenge today and what do you see as your biggest challenge in the future?

The CVC’s unique role in providing a secure public environment to welcome and manage a large number of visitors as part of the overall congressional commitment to protecting the U.S. Capitol is a singular honor and an ongoing challenge. Fiscal year 2017 was the highest yearly visitation since the opening in 2008 – exceeding previous yearly attendance by some 200,000 visitors. If this trend continues and in fact expands, the challenge of balancing the goal of enabling as many people as possible to safely visit the U.S. Capitol versus limited space that is reserved for congressional business and that is accessible to tours will only intensify.

The CVC will continue to be faced with how best to enhance management of high demand for tours versus the realities of how much foot traffic the U.S. Capitol building can safely and security accommodate. The CVC is confident that the appropriate balance will be found by collaborating with and seeking the guidance of its congressional oversight committees and congressional partners.