

OVERSIGHT OF THE ARCHITECT OF  
THE CAPITOL: A REVIEW OF THE  
THIRTEENTH ARCHITECT'S FIRST YEAR

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE  
ADMINISTRATION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

—————  
JUNE 25, 2025  
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**June 25, 2025**

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
*Washington, D.C.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:04 p.m., in room 1310, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Bryan Steil [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Steil, Loudermilk, Murphy, Bice, Carey, Miller, Morelle, and Torres.

Staff present: Mike Platt, Staff Director; Rachel Collins, General Counsel; Abby Salter, Deputy General Counsel; Jordan Wilson, Director of Member Services; Kristen Monterroso, Director of Operations; Elliot Smith, Director of Oversight; Phillip Pinegar, Professional Staff; Annemarie Cake, Professional Staff and Deputy Clerk; Jamie Fleet, Minority Staff Director; Khalil Abboud, Minority Deputy Staff Director; Sean Wright, Minority Chief Counsel; and Kwame Newton, Minority Oversight Counsel.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRYAN STEIL, CHAIRMAN OF  
THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION, A U.S. REP-  
RESENTATIVE FROM WISCONSIN**

Chairman STEIL. The Committee on House Administration will come to order.

The title of today's hearing is "Oversight of the Architect of the Capitol: A Review of the Thirteenth Architect's First Year."

I note a quorum is present, and, without objection, the chair may declare a recess at any time.

Also without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 5 legislative days so Members may submit any material they wish to be included therein.

Thank you, Representative Torres, as well as Ranking Member Morelle, who will be joining us in a little bit, and Members of the Committee for joining us here today.

Today, the Committee on House Administration is continuing our oversight of the Architect of the Capitol.

I want to welcome you, Mr. Architect, to the hearing today for your first appearance before the Committee on House Administration. I would like to also congratulate you on completing your first year as Architect of the Capitol.

As we both know, the Architect of the Capitol oversees facilities maintenance and operations of the historic U.S. Capitol and over 18 million square feet of buildings. That is in addition to the care and improvement of more than 570 acres of ground.

The Architect is responsible for the care of all works of art in the U.S. Capitol as well as maintenance and restoration of murals, outdoor sculptures, and other architectural elements throughout the Capitol campus.

In total, the Architect manages a workforce of approximately 2,500 employees. You also serve on a variety of boards and commissions, including, importantly, the Capitol Police Board.

Throughout this past year, the AOC has been addressing staffing shortfalls and reducing vacancies, from 11 percent to just over 6 percent. At this time last year, over one-third of the executive-level positions were acting or interim staff. Today, nearly all executive-level positions have been permanently filled.

Over the past year, the AOC completed organizational restructuring to clarify the responsibilities of each office and avoid unnecessary redundancies.

Additionally, the CVC welcomed its 30 millionth visitor since opening in 2008—an impressive number.

Keeping the Capitol campus both completely open to the public and safe at all times is no easy task. The U.S. House is actually one of the few legislative bodies in the world that is fully open and accessible to the public.

I greatly appreciate the work that you and, in particular, I know, a lot of the members of your team, the work that they do every day to make this a reality for the American people.

Under your leadership, the AOC has launched a substantial update to the Capitol Complex Master Plan, or CCMP. The CCMP is a document intended to be completed every 10 years as a 10-year look-ahead for physical campus and project development. The AOC, though, had not updated the CCMP in over 20 years. The previous Architect failed to deliver a substantive update on the CCMP in his 3 years. I hope to discuss the details of your update today.

An ongoing project that impacts almost everyone on the campus, in particular on the House side of the campus, is the Cannon House Office Building Renewal Project. The renewal project has been ongoing since 2015, and it has included extensive renovation on the interior of each wing and a partial facelift of the building's historic exterior.

Once renewal is completed later this year, late 2025, the Cannon Building courtyard will become usable green space for the first time since the garage was built below it in the 1950's.

I would like to note that the initial cost estimate for this project was \$752 million and the total estimated cost today is \$971 million, being over \$200 million over budget or 29 percent over the initial cost estimate. We can have a bit of a conversation on that as well.

Initially, the project was scheduled to be completed at the end of 2024. It is now scheduled to be completed at the end of 2025.

Large projects like this, I think, require oversight not only from the AOC Inspector General but also from Congress and us on this Committee.

The Committee was excited to see the selection of a new AOC Inspector General, announced last week, Mr. Luiz Santos. Today, the AOC has 37 open recommendations from the Inspector General's Office. Six months ago, I will note, there were 89 open recommendations, so significant improvement in that regard.

I look forward to your testimony on the status of the open recommendations and your plans to proactively work alongside the Inspector General to continue the AOC's improvement and growth when he starts next month.

In a hearing last month, the Committee discussed the Library of Congress's Visitor Experience Master Plan, or VEMP. The project is a vast renovation of public space in the Library's Jefferson Building, and while the project is managed by the Library, the implementation of construction is handled by you, the Architect of the Capitol.

The VEMP has experienced serious setbacks, internal and external, causing severe cutbacks to the project and large increases in its costs. If we look at this, since 2019, VEMP's budget has increased by \$31 million, and its completion date has been delayed past the congressional deadline of July 2026.

It is a result of numerous failures of the project management coordination, I think, between the Library and the AOC in years past, and I hope to discuss with you the AOC's role in this project during today's hearing.

In Fiscal Year 2025, the AOC's combined appropriation was \$820 million. For Fiscal Year 2026, you have requested \$1.28 billion, and the House Appropriations Committee has recommended \$701 million, so a bit of a discrepancy.

Given the size and scope of the agency, we have to make sure we are effectively and responsibly using taxpayer dollars. We hope to explore all these items I discussed in my remarks today with you.

Before I close my remarks, I would like to highlight that we will be test-piloting new closed-caption technology again during today's hearing. This technology was approved by the Subcommittee on Modernization and Innovation and will soon to be available to all House committees.

I go back, though, and say once again, I offer my congratulations on completing your first year as Architect of the Capitol, and I look forward to our conversation today.

With that, I will yield to Representative Torres for an opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Steil follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE  
ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION BRYAN STEIL**

Today, the Committee on House Administration is continuing its oversight of the Architect of the Capitol. I want to welcome you to our hearing today, and your first appearance before the Committee on House Administration. I would also like to congratulate you on completing your first year as Architect of the Capitol.

The Architect of the Capitol oversees facilities maintenance and operations of the historic U.S. Capitol and over 18 million square feet of buildings. This is in addition to the care and improvement of more than 570 acres of grounds. The Architect is responsible for the care of all works of art in the U.S. Capitol as well as the maintenance and restoration of murals, outdoor sculptures, and other architectural elements throughout the Capitol complex. In total, the Architect manages a workforce

of approximately 2,500 employees. The Architect also serves on a variety of boards and commissions, including the Capitol Police Board.

Throughout this past year, the AOC has been addressing staffing shortfalls and reduced vacancies from 11 percent to 6.6 percent. At this time last year, over one third of executive-level positions were acting or interim staff. Today, nearly all executive level positions have been permanently filled. Over the past year, the AOC completed organizational restructuring to clarify the responsibilities of each office and avoid unnecessary redundancies. Additionally, the CVC welcomed its 30 millionth visitor since opening in 2008.

Keeping the Capitol campus both completely open to the public and safe at all times is no easy task. The U.S. House is one of the few legislative bodies in the world that is fully open. I greatly appreciate the work that you and your team do every day to make this a reality for the American people.

Under your leadership, the AOC has launched a substantial update to the Capitol Complex Master Plan, or CCMP. The CCMP is a document intended to be completed every 10 years as a 10-year look ahead for physical campus and project development. The AOC has not updated its CCMP in over 20 years. The previous Architect failed to deliver a substantive update to the CCMP in three years. I hope to discuss the details of this update today. An ongoing project that impacts almost everyone on campus is the Cannon House Office Building Renewal project. The renewal project has been ongoing since 2015 and has included extensive renovation of the interior of each wing and a partial facelift of the building's historic exterior.

Once renewal is complete in late 2025, the Cannon Building courtyard will become usable green space for the first time since the garage below it was built in the 1950s. I would like to note that the initial cost estimate for this project was \$752.7 million. The total estimated cost today is \$971.2 million. This is \$218.5 million, or 29 percent over the initial cost estimate. Initially, the project was scheduled to be completed by December 31, 2024. It is now scheduled to be completed on December 1, 2025. Large projects like this require oversight from Congress and the AOC Inspector General. The Committee was excited to see the selection of a new AOC IG announced last week, Mr. Luiz [Luis] Santos.

Today, the AOC has 37 open recommendations from the Inspector General's Office. Six months ago, there were 89 open recommendations. I look forward to your testimony on the status of the open recommendations, and your plans to proactively work alongside Inspector General Santos to continue AOC's improvement and growth when he starts next month. In a hearing last month, this Committee discussed the Library of Congress' Visitor Experience Master Plan, or VEMP.

This project is a vast renovation of public spaces in the Library's Jefferson Building. While the project is managed by the Library, the implementation of construction is handled by the Architect of the Capitol. VEMP has experienced serious setbacks, internal and external, causing severe cutbacks to the project and large increases to its cost.

Since 2019, VEMP's budget has increased by \$31.5 million, and its completion date has been delayed past the congressional deadline of July 2026. This is the result of numerous failures of project management and coordination between the Library and AOC in years past. I hope to discuss the AOC's role in this project in today's hearing.

In Fiscal Year 2025, the AOC's combined appropriation was \$820.3 million. For Fiscal Year 2026, the AOC has requested \$1.28 billion, while the Appropriations Committee has recommended only \$701 million. Given size and scope of this agency, it must effectively and responsibly use taxpayer dollars. We hope to explore all of these items discussed in my remarks with you today.

Before I close my remarks, I would like highlight that we will be test-piloting new closed caption technology again during today's hearing. This technology was approved by the Subcommittee on Modernization and Innovation, and will soon be available to all House Committees.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. NORMA TORRES, A U.S.  
REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA**

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Chairman Steil.

Mr. Austin, thank you for being here today, and, also, congratulations on your 1-year anniversary.

Members of Congress could not perform their constitutional duties without you and the AOC's dedicated 2,500-person workforce, including skilled tradespeople who maintain our historic buildings,

conservation experts who preserve our priceless art, groundskeepers who tend 570 acres of lawns and gardens, facilities personnel who keep our offices clean, and Capitol guides who educate millions of visitors each year.

The AOC's mission extends beyond facilities maintenance and preservation to include other critical duties like congressional security—tragically, now more relevant than ever. The agency is responsible for the Capitol's campus physical security and has led many of the security upgrades necessitated by the January 6th attack.

As one of three voting members of the Capitol Police Board, the Architect helps oversee the Capitol Police and the protection of Members wherever they are, whether here in D.C., their districts, or traveling in between.

We are less than 2 weeks removed from the horrific series of political assassinations and attempted assassinations in Minnesota that killed one State lawmaker and her spouse and critically injured another and his spouse.

We have since then learned that the alleged perpetrator had a hit list that included multiple Members of Congress and writings mentioning dozens more.

These acts of political violence were not isolated incidents. Threats against Members of Congress have surged almost 1,000 percent since 2016.

Political violence has changed the lives and careers of Members in both parties, harmed their families, and driven good people from public service while deterring the next generation of leaders from entering it.

Given this backdrop, I am interested in hearing today, to the extent appropriate in a public setting, about progress on hardening the Capitol Complex, development of exterior screening, and other campus security upgrades. Of course, these upgrades require funding, and I want to hear your frank assessment of whether Congress is giving you the resources that you need to accomplish this.

I have said many times, we must invest significantly more in legislative branch, yet the Fiscal Year 2025 continuing resolution represents a 12-percent reduction from Fiscal Year 2024 enacted levels for the AOC. Just days ago, House Republicans released their Fiscal Year 2026 legislative branch appropriations bill, which funds the AOC an astounding \$411.9 million below its budget request.

How have these draconian budgets already affected security projects? I want to know what will happen to these projects if the Fiscal Year 2026 House bill becomes law. Beyond security, what other essential AOC work will suffer? Will elevators fail more frequently? Will more pipes begin to burst? Will repairs that should be resolved in days end up taking months or years?

This hearing is also taking place amid the President's extraordinary assault on Congress and legislative-branch independence. Just months ago, and days after receiving bipartisan praise while sitting in that very chair, President Trump arbitrarily fired the Librarian of Congress.

Fortunately, last Congress, our good friend Chairman Steil and the Ranking Member authored the bill that changed the Architect

from a Presidential appointment to a congressional appointment. Now, only Congress can hire and fire the Architect.

As my colleagues and I craft similar legislation for other agencies, I am eager to hear how the independence you have has helped you run the AOC, in contrast to other legislative-branch and independent agencies like the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian.

I am hopeful that my majority colleagues will join me in defending our institutional prerogatives while we have a Republican in the White House, just as we in the minority did when we had a Democrat in the White House.

There are many other important services and functions the AOC performs for Congress, and, frankly, I wish I was not compelled to spend so much time today discussing political violence and constitutional law. The AOC will soon finish the Cannon renovation project, and planning is underway for the badly needed Rayburn House Office Building renovation.

I am looking forward to discussing these projects as well as your work to reset the agency's culture and leadership and more this afternoon. Thank you again for your service to Congress and our country.

I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Torres follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE NORMA  
TORRES**

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Chairman STEIL. The gentlewoman yields back.

Without objection, all other Members' opening statements will be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Committee clerk by 5 p.m. today.

As our witness today we have Mr. Thomas Austin, the Architect of the Capitol.

Mr. Austin, thank you for being here with us today, and you are recognized for 5 minutes for your opening statement.

#### **STATEMENT OF THOMAS E. AUSTIN, ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL**

Mr. AUSTIN. Good afternoon, Chairman Steil, Representative Torres, and Members of the this Committee. I am honored to appear before you to represent the hardworking employees of the Architect of the Capitol.

I would like to thank the members of your staff, particularly Elliot Smith, Phillip Pinegar, Matthew Schlesinger, and Kwame Newton, for their expertise and consistent professionalism.

I welcome this opportunity to share more about the agency's work in preserving the historic buildings and grounds that inspire our Nation while serving the 30,000 daily occupants and the more than 3 million annual visitors to the Capitol campus.

To begin, I would like to acknowledge and express my deepest gratitude to the 2,500 dedicated Architect of the Capitol employees for all of their hard work which makes it possible for this agency to successfully carry out its mission to serve Congress and the Supreme Court, preserve America's Capitol, and inspire memorable experiences.

This mission requires around-the-clock care for the 18.5 million square feet of historic facilities, 570 acres of grounds, and thousands of works of art that make up our iconic campus.

As you know, I began my tenure in June 2024. It is the greatest honor of my professional life to serve as the 13th Architect of the Capitol. Thank you for entrusting me to serve as a steward of the historic and vital buildings that make up the Capitol campus, en-

sureing their preservation, functionality, and safety for Members of Congress, staff, and visitors.

Throughout my first year as the Architect of the Capitol, one of my top priorities has been consistent communication with the AOC staff. Through multiple employee town halls, frequent visits to the AOC workshops during day and night shifts, and one-on-one meetings with members of my senior leadership team, I stay up to date on the issues of the day and the opportunities for tomorrow.

I firmly believe that modeling this level of communication and engagement is essential to building and maintaining the morale of the AOC workforce and confidence in our agency's leadership.

We are dedicated to delivering exceptional services.

As part of that dedication, ensuring physical security and life safety is always paramount. Across the agency, we frequently commit time and attention to the safety training of our staff, review of safety procedures, and consistent communication with security and safety partners. I am proud to report that our employee injury rate is significantly lower than that of the private sector.

Security is always a key priority. With the support of this Subcommittee and Appropriations Committees and in coordination with the U.S. Capitol Police, the Architect of the Capitol has made significant progress over the past few years and will continue to improve the security posture across our campus. We thank you for all of your support in this very important area.

To serve Congress effectively, the AOC also continues to prioritize the recruitment and retention of qualified employees. We have established an apprenticeship program to build and maintain a pool of experienced tradespeople and support our specialty workforce. We participate in dozens of career fairs and events annually to promote the unique opportunities for employment with the Architect of the Capitol.

A robust workforce is necessary for the AOC to consistently meet the needs of the Members of the House of Representatives. Our House Office Buildings jurisdiction receives as many as 14,000 work-order requests per month that must be addressed in a timely and professional manner.

Another top priority for the AOC is the critical-infrastructure needs of the Capitol campus. I recognize the importance of a holistic, long-term approach to facilities management focused on maintaining and preserving the Capitol complex while also modernizing our facilities.

To effectively and efficiently address the various challenges of aging historic infrastructure, the AOC is implementing the Enterprise Asset Management System. This system provides centralized asset monitoring, enabling a more structured approach to managing asset-related activities throughout their lifecycle, forecasting resource needs, translating risks into asset management strategies, and prioritizing maintenance based on conditions.

Furthermore, a robust asset management system will enhance data-driven fiscal decisions and help prioritize our projects, aimed at reducing our growing maintenance backlog. These efforts will increase efficiency and further enhance the AOC's goal of preserving the historic buildings that inspire our Nation.

We are committed to working closely with you and your staff to ensure the AOC meets the needs and expectations of the U.S. House of Representatives in service to Congress and the American people.

Chairman Steil, Representative Torres, and Members of this Committee, thank you again for your continued support of the Architect of the Capitol. I am honored to be here today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Austin follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF THOMAS E. AUSTIN**

**Statement of Thomas Austin, Architect**  
Committee on House Administration Hearing |  
Architect of the Capitol  
June 25, 2025

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle and distinguished Members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC). We are committed to working closely with you and your staff to ensure the AOC meets the needs and expectations of the U.S. House of Representatives in service to Congress and the American people.

It is an honor to serve as the 13th Architect of the Capitol and as a steward of the historic and vital buildings that make up the Capitol campus, ensuring their preservation, functionality and safety for Members of Congress, staff and visitors. As you know, I began my tenure in June of 2024 and am privileged, day in and day out, to be entrusted to lead this remarkable agency.

I speak on behalf of the entire AOC leadership team when I say we are enormously grateful for the 2,500 hardworking, devoted AOC employees who tirelessly carry out their duties in support of Congress, the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress and the many other AOC-managed facilities.

One of my top priorities is close communication with AOC staff, which I believe is essential to building and maintaining faith and confidence in our agency's leadership. Whether discussing the particulars of daily operations or our broader visions for the future of the campus, I am equally committed to practicing clear and timely communication that ensures accountability and coordination with this committee, Congress and internal AOC entities.

In keeping with the trust inherent in this role, I am dedicated to leading with transparency and integrity as we meet our mission to serve Congress and the Supreme Court, preserve America's Capitol and inspire memorable experiences.

**I. Overview**

The AOC plays a vital role in supporting the operations of Congress, the Supreme Court and the Library of Congress. Our staff works around the clock to preserve and maintain over 18.5 million square feet of facilities, 570 acres of grounds and thousands of works of art. This 24-hour, seven-day-per-week operation works in concert to preserve our historic assets and improve aging infrastructure. Beyond these preservation and maintenance priorities, our team is also responsible for hosting many key events and seasonal traditions that bring together thousands of visitors each year. From preparations for the annual Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony to a multi-month effort in constructing the Presidential Inauguration platform, the AOC continually delivers with professionalism and expertise.

**II. Prioritizing Physical Security & Life Safety**

Ensuring physical security and life safety is paramount. Thanks to your support, the AOC has

made significant strides in enhancing security measures across the campus. Collaboration with internal and external partners has strengthened emergency planning and bolstered security for events at the Capitol campus. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget request aligns with our coordinated approach to address security projects consisting of significant construction or system replacements to support the United States Capitol Police and House and Senate Sergeants at Arms' missions.

The agency also remains committed to staff safety, dedicating time and attention to training, processes, procedures and operations. These efforts protect not only our staff but ensure a safe working environment for Members of Congress, their staff, and the public.

### **III. Workforce Investments & Meeting Mission Requirements**

Under my leadership, the Architect of the Capitol has been restructuring to clarify the responsibilities of each office and avoid unnecessary redundancies. We have centralized two AOC contracting offices that were operating under separate AOC jurisdictions into the Acquisitions and Material Management Division. With this change, we have streamlined operations and improved efficiency both internally and with our external project collaborators.

A robust workforce is necessary for the Architect of the Capitol to consistently meet the needs of the 435 Members of the House of Representatives. Our Human Capital Strategy revolves around three pillars: talent acquisition, talent development, and engagement and retention of employees. We are updating our wage grades for our skilled labor employees in order to appropriately compensate and retain a skilled workforce to meet the needs of Congress. We have established an apprenticeship program to build and maintain a pool of experienced tradespeople to support our specialty workforce, and we participate in dozens of career fairs and events annually to promote the unique opportunities for employment with the Architect of the Capitol. Our Human Capital Management Division is continuously working to support our staff so that the AOC can ensure it retains a skilled workforce capable of maintaining and modernizing the campus.

### **IV. Modern Management of Aging Infrastructure**

The AOC is dedicated to a holistic, long-term strategy for facilities management that emphasizes the maintenance and preservation of the Capitol campus while also modernizing these spaces. The aging infrastructure and facilities of the campus present ongoing challenges that are further compounded by inflationary increases, uninterrupted operations and unforeseen emergency repairs. In the 119th Congress, the AOC is focusing on critical priorities such as upgrading hearing rooms, addressing aging elevators, replacing mechanical systems, and making necessary renovations of fire alarms and sprinkler systems. Along with these infrastructure projects, our House Office Buildings jurisdiction receives as many as 14,000 work order requests each month which must be addressed in short order.

Additionally, the AOC is developing an Enterprise Asset Management system to create an enhanced, organized method for managing, coordinating and overseeing asset-related activities throughout their respective lifecycles. A well-developed asset management system will offer

more detailed insights to enhance data-driven financial decisions and project prioritization while also addressing backlog and deferred maintenance issues.

**V. Conclusion**

On behalf of the dedicated employees at the AOC, I extend our gratitude to this committee for your ongoing support. Your dedication and partnership in service to the American people are integral to our daily operations and mission accomplishment. Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle and Members of the committee, thank you for your time and your continued support of the AOC.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

We will now begin questions. I will recognize myself for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions.

I want to dive in out of the gates, if I can, on the Capitol Complex Master Plan. It has been over two decades since this has been updated. I know this has been a priority of you and your team.

Can you give us an update as to when we might expect that and any top-line items that you are seeing in that plan?

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure. Thank you for the question, Chairman. That has been the top priority for my agency and certainly in planning and formulation of the Capitol Campus Master Plan.

We have created a subset of that, which is the Capitol Campus Blueprint, which we are most focused on, which has four key components, the first of which is the House Office Building renewal, specifically the Rayburn renewal that we have been discussing. The second component is the needs of the Senate community, specifically their own renewal efforts as well as capacity issues. Third is the U.S. Capitol Police Headquarters, which we have had past legislation directing us to look into. The fourth is our utility resiliency.

The next-biggest issue that we are addressing with this Committee, as well as the Appropriations Committees, is the Rayburn House Office Building Renewal. We are in the midst of looking at how we are going to go about that.

We appreciate the meeting we had with this Committee and Appropriations last year where you gave us a way forward, gave us some parameters for our swing space study, which we are finishing up right now. We expect that swing space study to be complete next month and look forward to providing those results to you.

That is going to kind of drive where we are going to go next in this program as far as how we are going to plan it—which direction we are going to go into, whether we are renovating existing space or looking to craft new space.

Chairman STEIL. What lessons learned—if we go back and look at the Cannon Renewal Project, it was over 30 percent over its initial estimate, over \$200 million. What lessons learned, as we look at, you know, broad, complicated projects—you mentioned Rayburn—can we draw from that project?

Mr. AUSTIN. Absolutely. Cannon, as you well know, has been a 10-year renovation program—5 phases total, 2 years each, tied to the Member move cycle. There have been certainly a lot of lessons learned that we have been able to take from that.

After every phase, after every 2 years, we conducted an after-actions review where those lessons were gathered and then applied to future phases. We are certainly looking at those top-line lessons that we are going to apply toward something like Rayburn, the biggest of which is, we are officially—well, go back to your point about the cost estimate.

The cost estimate for Cannon was done in the pretty early stages of planning on this, and it had a large, you know, margin of error; it was about plus or minus 40 percent. Even with all of the challenges we came across with Cannon, we are still within that plus or minus 40 percent. As you pointed out earlier, it is about 29 percent. Not great, but given all the challenges that particular program had to overcome, between the pandemic and historic inflation

and a large work stoppage and a lot of things that happened artificially to that project, it is still within that margin of error.

That is too large of a margin of error to give this Committee, which I believe—and the Appropriations. What we want to do with Rayburn is get to a further stage of development in the design of it so that we have a better what is called a “program of requirements” at hand.

Some of the lessons that we want to—

Chairman STEIL. Let me jump in, just because we are going to run out of time. I appreciate the robust answer. When we are doing plus and minus, always happy to have you on the minus side. We will discuss that further later.

Let me jump into another topic that broadly is inside this Capitol campus plan but a little more detailed.

Congress’s public accessibility is kind of one of our great strengths of our Republic, but it also creates unique vulnerabilities. As I noted in my opening remarks, the Capitol campus is open and accessible to the American people, and we task not only the Capitol Police but also the physical infrastructure with keeping us safe.

In Fiscal Year 2023, there was a 540-percent increase in funds dedicated to U.S. Capitol Police buildings and security upgrades. Excluding the funds for the new security vestibule for the Capitol Building, there is still a 400-percent increase.

Can you speak to how the AOC is allocating those funds?

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure.

There is a variety of initiatives that we have undertaken. I think the most visible one, which I am sure we can go into in more detail if you would like, was the replacement of the doors and windows on the Capitol Building itself, to make them hardened against intrusion.

We are happy to report that all of those doors have been either hardened or have been replaced, as well as the frames. A significant number of the interior doors, as well as windows, have also been done. That was part of that project.

We have what is called a “west front expansion,” where we are looking at replacement of lights, bollards, and security cameras.

We are also looking at improvements on the Senate side. They have some similar hardening that we are also looking to do on the House side with additional doors and windows.

We have done proximity-card-reader installations. We have done more security cameras in this building and others—in the Capitol buildings, both the House Office Buildings.

Then, of course, you have already mentioned one of the biggest ones, which is coming up at the end of this year, as far as the acquisition, which is the south pedestrian screening vestibule.

Chairman STEIL. All right.

I appreciate you being here today. I will note that this is a nice change of tone from our previous oversight hearing with the Architect of the Capitol’s Office, and so we appreciate and congratulate you on your work.

I will just note, there are a lot of great men and women who work under your leadership. We appreciate your leadership, but we also appreciate the work of many of those great, talented men and women, some of whom I have known for many years.

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

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to thank Mrs. Torres for standing in. My apologies for being late, but I am grateful.

Also, thank you to the Architect, Mr. Austin, on year of service now almost, or a little over a year, I think.

I wanted to follow up on what the chair asked about and just focus for a moment or two about the continued threats, the threat level. I know you are working with the Capitol Police; you are one of the three voting members of the board.

You mentioned the vestibules. I know I have asked about this before. Can you just give me an update on the screening vestibules for security outside the Capitol? I know that we have been talking—the Senate side has them. Can you just give me a sense of where we are in that and when you expect them to be constructed?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir.

The south screening vestibule, the one that is going to service the House side of the Capitol Building, is fully designed. We are going into acquisition in the fall. We expect a contract award either at the end of this calendar year or very shortly thereafter.

We expect to go into construction next year, with a 2-year construction timeline, and be complete by the summer of 2028, well in advance of the next inaugural ceremony.

Mr. MORELLE. Got it. OK. Thank you.

I did want to ask about the funding constraints. I know you are operating under pretty significant budgetary constraints, and I apologize if you mentioned this in your testimony, but a 12-percent reduction Fiscal Year 2024 to the 2025 continuing-resolution levels.

Can you talk a little bit about how the reduction has affected your office and what you are doing, with sort of a focus on the security-related projects?

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure. Thank you for the question.

Yes, in 2024, there was a \$200 million reduction from the previous year, excluding the security issues. Then in 2025, with the CR, that was a further 12 percent.

Where those reductions came—besides freezing the personnel numbers, which that did—was a reduction in our long-term capital renewal projects, things like handling some of our mechanical systems, plumbing systems, fire-suppression systems, things like that.

Because of the plus-up we did receive in 2023, most of our security projects were not affected. Where they are affected is our normal rotational maintenance, where we replace bollards, some of the checkpoint buildings, some of those barrier systems that we replace on a periodic basis as they work through their lifecycle.

Those have been deferred, and we are certainly monitoring those systems to make sure we do not have any outages. We work very carefully with the U.S. Capitol Police, who controls that contract, but we control other aspects of the physical barriers.

That is where we have—I am happy to speak about some of the facility issues if you would like some—

Mr. MORELLE. No, that is helpful.

This week, my colleagues on the other side, House Republicans, released the 2026 Fiscal Year leg. branch approps. I serve on Ap-

propriations. That funds the AOC I think at approximately \$412 million less than your budget request.

If enacted at those levels, how would this bill affect your ability to keep, again, security projects—can you talk a little about the impact it will have on security here? Because that is doing a lot more with a significant amount less than you had asked for.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir.

Fortunately, most of the large projects that we requested in the 2026 budget were not security-related. It goes back toward my previous answer; it goes toward those regular programmatic replacements that we do with, like, the barriers and the vestibules and the bollards and things of that nature. Those would be delayed.

It did not affect—because we had been previously appropriated—the south screening vestibule as well as what we call the West Front Expansion Project, which is a variety of things we are doing on the west side of the Capitol—lights, bollards, cameras, things of that nature.

It does affect us in facilities, not as much for security.

Mr. MORELLE. Yes. I wanted you to talk to me about that. The non-security. What other things are you doing that will—as a result, what is the impact of not having the dollars you requested? What are things that are going to change?

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure. This is—I know we are short on your time, sir, so I will try to abbreviate this. This is a much longer answer, and I would very much like a chance to engage with you further on this.

When it comes to these projects that we are deferring, these capital renewal projects, when we are talking about these large systems, whether it be fire-suppression systems, air-handling units, mechanical units, et cetera, when we delay those repairs, that increases the risk of one of those systems failing. It could be a small failure like a leak of a pipe, or it could be an air-handling unit that fails catastrophically and cuts off circulated air in a building. The more those projects get delayed, the more that risk accumulates.

Some of our projects, like with Rayburn, which we discussed before you came, that building is over 60 years old, and many of those mechanical components are original to the building. Usually those components are 30-year program lifecycle, and we are now in year 60 of those.

It is an accumulation of risk. We take more risk the more that projects are deferred.

Mr. MORELLE. Well, I do look forward to opportunities, either in formal or informally with the chair, to continue to consult with you. I appreciate your answers and appreciate your service.

I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

The gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Loudermilk, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Austin, thank you for being here.

Let me commend you on overcoming some significant challenges early this year, with the last-minute moving of the inauguration inside and, more importantly to the Members from Georgia, also throwing in the work that came with the lying in State of Presi-

dent Carter. I appreciate the flawless—seemingly flawless efforts that you made to make sure all that happened well.

My first question is about critical infrastructure. I know that is one of your stated duties. What do you see as the House's greatest physical-infrastructure need or vulnerability?

Mr. AUSTIN. The biggest project that we are working on, sir, is, of course, the Rayburn Renewal Project that has been the focus of our House Office Buildings Capitol Campus Master Plan that the Chairman spoke about earlier and which I spoke about a moment ago.

That is the biggest one because it has multiple systems that need to be repaired. We get leaks in the Rayburn Building all the time—some small, some big. Some impact Member suites. Some impact storage areas. Some are just in the garage. We had two this past week alone.

The only way to address those kinds of things is with a full capital renewal, which unfortunately means displacing Members for an extended period of time so we can open up the walls, remediate the hazardous materials that are still in those spaces, and do the needed work to refresh and renew those systems.

I would say, if you are looking for the largest project on that side, it would be the Rayburn full building renewal.

The largest major component is related to that, which is the Rayburn air-handling units. I spoke a moment ago about the leaks. The way those pipes, especially the secondary water system—that brings the cool, chilled water in the summertime that provides our air conditioning and the steam in the wintertime that provides our heat. Those pipes are, again, original to the building, 60-year-old galvanized pipe, and we have a lot of leaks in that system. It cannot be inspected, because most of them are behind the walls or in crawl spaces.

What we are trying to do is bring as much of that system offline as possible by increasing the forced air into the suites, but the only way to do that is to upgrade those air-handling systems.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Well, I appreciate that.

Since we are talking about Rayburn, let us stay there just for a minute.

One of the, I will say, frustrations that I have had, the 6 years I have been in Rayburn, is the escalator systems, that it seems that you are lucky to get an escalator that is actually going up or going down two floors. It seems to be random; you never know which. You may have two going up; you may only have one going up.

Can you enlighten us as to what the issues are with keeping the escalators running, and what are we going to do about it?

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure.

Across the House Office Building jurisdiction, we have 28 escalator systems, of which, as of today, 24 are operational, but 4, as you pointed out, are not.

Three of them are in the Rayburn Building. Those are the interior escalators, so there are elevators that can take that load.

Certainly, those escalators are also—like I spoke about some of the mechanical systems in that building—are original to the building. A lot of those parts are no longer made anymore, so my ma-

chine shops, my sheet-metal shops are fabricating these things in order to replace them. When we can get parts, oftentimes it is a long lead time to get those parts.

The short answer is: They are old. The longer answer is: When they do break, it takes longer to get those parts because they are just not made anymore.

My team does a great job. I have walked with them at different times and different places in order to understand those challenges. They do regular inspections, regular maintenance. When it comes to the escalators specifically, we are maintaining antiques that we keep in operation nearly 24/7.

In order to save wear and tear on them, some of those are turned off when Congress is not in session because the personnel load is less. We do have challenges with those, unquestionably.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Are we to the point where we need to replace those?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. The short answer is, yes, we do.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. All right. Thank you. Please let us know how we can help.

All right. Thank you.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

Representative Torres is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Chairman, again.

Good afternoon again. I am going to go right into the questions, because I have so many and I want to make sure that I cover everything.

After January 6th, one of the things that we heard was that the Architect's views were often not provided the same weight as those of other members of the Capitol Police Board.

I am curious to know, how has your experience been serving on that Capitol Police Board so far, and do you feel like your opinion is valued? How often do you communicate with Capitol Police and the rest of the Board? How often do you revisit your priorities based on evolving threats?

Mr. AUSTIN. I am happy to say that I have a very good relationship with both the Senate and the House Sergeant at Arms.

We meet on a very regular basis. I have one-on-one meetings with them monthly, but, I would say, as a group, the three of us meet together at least weekly. Certainly, over the last couple months, with the replacement of the U.S. Capitol Police Chief, we have been meeting on a much more regular basis for that.

Anytime we are having a National Special Security Event, anytime there is a major event happening on campus, anytime the U.S. Capitol Police wants to give us an update, we all meet.

I cannot speak for the actions of the previous Architect or how he was or was not received as part of that panel, but I can say, with the current configuration of the Capitol Police Board, we are very much an equal partnership amongst the three of us.

Mrs. TORRES. I cannot tell you how happy it makes me to hear that, because we do want all of you to have a good working relationship and to continue to evolve your security plans based on real-time threats.

Mr. Austin, we have talked a little bit about the cut in your budget. I am very concerned about that.

Look, in response to the multiple threats that I have personally received, I have started once again looking into pricing out a security gate for the front of my home. I can tell you that, right after January 6th, when I first got a quote, that quote that I received this last week for that same gate is about three times as much.

The cost has gone so high because of the tariff agreements, the instability of materials that are available, the lack of materials that are available.

Tell me, how do you plan to manage a drastic, draconian reduction in your budget given all of the challenges that you have that are beyond your control?

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure. Thank you for the question. We stand ready to execute the mission with the funding that Congress provides, unquestionably.

I spoke a few moments ago about, when it comes to cuts to our budget, they have primarily come from our capital renewal—our capital projects, the larger projects, the projects in the anywhere from \$5 million to \$50 million range when we talk about these major components inside of our facilities.

Fortunately, we have not seen—or we have not had any large cuts to our security budget. We still have money that was previously appropriated in the 2023 cycle for some of these improvements we spoke about earlier.

I will talk about the major components, because our number-one priority for the Architect of the Capitol is the life, health, and safety of our building occupants. Our second priority is the constitutional duty of our Members of Congress, to make sure that you—

Mrs. TORRES. You do not control the costs. I am concerned that these costs—are they coming in much higher than previously? Is that what your experience has been?

Mr. AUSTIN. We have seen different costs in different areas.

Now, the bump we had during the pandemic with the supply chain disruptions, particularly when it came to the material cost of steel and wood and things of that nature, those have mostly settled out. Now, it is a higher level than it was 5 years ago, unquestionably, but those are mostly settled out.

Where we are seeing some issues that we have had is, we have been adding 5 percent to our construction cost contingencies across all of our projects because of that instability in costs—

Mrs. TORRES. Is 5 percent enough? I am hearing from other local agencies that 20 percent is more of a magic number, 20 to 30 percent.

Mr. AUSTIN. This is kind of one of those “it depends” answers, because—

Mrs. TORRES. OK.

Mr. AUSTIN [continuing]. It depends on the type of project and the type of project that we are going to be doing. Certainly, when it comes to cost estimates, we have been adding to our contingencies.

Mrs. TORRES. I do want to follow up with you in a personal meeting with you. There are multiple issues that I want to discuss with you, and I do not want to take the time here, nor do I think it is appropriate for a public conversation.

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand.

Mrs. TORRES. I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentlewoman yields back.

I note that the clock may not be working, but we will—I will just aggressively gavel you out, Dr. Murphy, when you hit 5 minutes.

No, on a serious note, Dr. Murphy, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Dr. MURPHY. Mr. Austin, can you fix the clock there real quickly?

Thank you. Thank you for your service. It was unfortunate circumstance, but we are glad that you are here. Incompetence cannot be tolerated, especially for the taxpayers of the American public.

I am going to finish up with Mr. Loudermilk's little soliloquy on the escalator. You know, it is one thing to make new materials for an escalator. It might be a little different thing to make them for elevators. There is a little bit more at stake there; it is called gravity.

Can you tell me—because we are doing the same kind of things here, that the elevators are not working. Are you facing the same problems that you are dealing with with the escalators? Or what is the issue with the elevators being out?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir. Thank you for the question.

Generally speaking, we have a lot of similarities with the elevators versus the escalators.

The elevators, as of this morning—we checked before I came in—there are 85 across the House Office Buildings jurisdiction, and 83 of them are functional as of today. Now, I understand—

Dr. MURPHY. I think those two just follow me around.

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I cannot speak to the specific two you are talking about, but there are two that are down in the Rayburn Building at the moment, yes, sir.

Dr. MURPHY. I guess I will not be going there.

Mr. AUSTIN. The issues with some of these elevators are, in the case of, say, the Longworth Building, they are 90 years old. Some components have been replaced over the years, and some have not. Certainly, anytime we are trying to maintain those, as you pointed out, elevators have an increased risk.

I will say—and I would like to make this as a blanket statement for both elevators and escalators—that anyone who is riding those is safe. We do not have any issues as far as the safety aspects of them.

As far as the functionality, some outages are mechanical issues, which falls on the Architect of the Capitol. Some of the outages we have had recently were the result of some of the proximity-card readers. When those go out, they have to be adjusted with the House Sergeant at Arms, and we work with them to make sure that is there.

What we are doing to try to fix this, to get ahead of this issue—

Dr. MURPHY. Yes.

Mr. AUSTIN [continuing]. is that we are working in, kind of, three different ways.

One, we are installing a new monitoring system for all of the House Office Building elevators. There used to be a monitoring system a few years back, but because of the age of the components, it could no longer be secured against cyber threats, and so we took

that system offline. This new system is hardened against cyber threats, and we are installing it as we speak.

It is a multiyear contract, but what that gets us is it gets us better real-time data so that when we have an elevator that goes down our elevator mechanics can respond right away. It also allows us to fix small, you know, easy issues—like, if the door is held open too long and it makes the elevator reset, we can reset that elevator remotely, which we cannot do right now. That will fix part of that.

The second thing is, we have a multimillion-dollar program where we are doing component restoration on these elevators, similar to one that we are currently doing with the Senate, but we will be going around and replacing major components. That began funding in Fiscal Year 2025, and we have money set aside for Fiscal Year 2026 and beyond to continue that program.

Beyond that, we are also ensuring we have 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week coverage. When Congress is in session, that includes an elevator mechanic 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When Congress is not in session, our elevator mechanics cannot maintain—

Dr. MURPHY. Are those in-house people?

Mr. AUSTIN. Those are in-house mechanics. We have both in-house and contracted mechanics.

Dr. MURPHY. All right.

Mr. AUSTIN. When Congress is out of session, we will have someone who responds right away, but they may have to call someone to do—

Dr. MURPHY. Sure.

Mr. AUSTIN [continuing]. the elevator-specific repairs.

Dr. MURPHY. How much time have I got? Oh, 5 minutes? OK, good.

I want to follow just up on that, because I think, you know, especially with the escalators, if we are spending more money fixing them, let us just do a flash dance in August, fix them all, and, you know, people will have to do their thing. We just need—we do not need to be spending money when we should be just investing in fixing it. I am sure that you can get back with us.

Real quickly, just on the cybersecurity issue, you know, the Capitol Power Plant is just down the street. That, obviously, in today's world of espionage and cyber attacks, is an issue that we have to keep our place safe.

I just wondered if you could, as much as you can in detail, talk about how you help confront any of the cybersecurity details at the power plant.

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure. I will preface this by saying, there are some aspects that I do not want to give out in a public forum—

Dr. MURPHY. Sure.

Mr. AUSTIN [continuing]. but I would be happy to meet with you in private and give you more details.

What I can say publicly is that, overall, the first line of defense is that any of our systems, our computer systems, at Capitol Power Plant is what we call “air-gapped.” They are not connected to the larger internet.

We have also instituted what is called a “zero trust architecture” and a closed loop. What I mean by that is, anything that comes onto that separate system has to be, like, physically let onto the

system, be allowed to actually operate; it cannot just automatically connect. By doing that, we reduce the amount of systems that actually can connect to it and reduce the threat of anything happening to that system.

We have kind of made the choice to disconnect ourselves from the larger internet for our building control systems so that they are not vulnerable to hackers on the outside. Then anything that could be imported into it, again, we have that zero trust architecture to make sure—

Dr. MURPHY. Great.

Mr. AUSTIN [continuing]. those are manually permitted onto—

Dr. MURPHY. Sadly, you know, we have to pay so much more money into that.

Can I ask one more quick question?

Just, you had asked, requested now \$200 million for the Botanic Garden. That is, like, 10 times what was before. Can you just elaborate on why that is a need?

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure.

I think it is a good point to bring up, the Botanic Garden is more than just what is here on campus. There is what we call a production facility, which is in the District of Columbia, a place called Blue Plains. That provides most of the plants, does a lot of the work, you know, exchanges between what is actually in season at the conservatory and then what is actually being produced out at the production facility.

When we took that over about 30 years ago, that facility was renovated from an existing one, was built for us because there was a land exchange between us and the District of Columbia. What this project was for, for the production facility, was a complete renewal of that production facility—redoing all the greenhouses, all the mechanical systems, all of the infrastructure for that facility. That is what that program was for.

Dr. MURPHY. Great.

Mr. AUSTIN. It is sort of similar to the challenges we have here on campus, is that most of those mechanical and plumbing and electrical systems are original and need to be replaced.

Dr. MURPHY. Great. Thank you.

It looks like I have gone over my time, even though I think that was manipulated, but thank you.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

The gentlewoman from Oklahoma, Representative Bice, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Austin, for being with us this afternoon.

I want to say a special appreciation for your participation in the tree planting of the sapling from the Oklahoma City Memorial Tree that we were able to plant a few weeks ago. It was, I think, a wonderful remembrance of the 30th anniversary and a huge blessing to those who have been impacted by the Oklahoma City bombing 30 years ago. Thank you for participating in that.

Whew. Excuse me. I was trucking it over here to make sure I did not miss my opportunity.

Dr. MURPHY. I tried to filibuster for you.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you very much. Appreciate that.

Let me start by asking you: I know that there has been some, I think, challenges with collaboration across agencies, but you have really made, I think, a focused effort to try to collaborate better with House entities. Can you talk a little bit about collaboration—strengthening collaboration between the CAO, AOC, and other House agencies?

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure. It has been a focus of my time here, is to be more collaborative in general but certainly be more collaborative with our fellow agencies. We work very closely with House CAO, with House Sergeant at Arms, with the Clerk's Office. We do small get-togethers where we talk to each other but also have regular meetings with them.

There are certainly a lot of efficiencies that we can have in those agencies, and I look forward to discussing with this Committee and others ways that we can clear some of the lines of effort between, for instance, the Architect of the Capitol and the House CAO.

We have done a lot of collaboration with them. I believe we have a very good relationship. I actually was just down touring the House CAO shops less than 2 weeks ago, and I was very happy that the CAO allowed me to do so.

Mrs. BICE. I would just echo that I have heard, I think, really positive things coming out of other House entities on their ability to collaborate and work with your organization. Thank you for being that conduit.

For more than a decade, the Architect of the Capitol has carried out the Cannon Renewal Project. I would like to know your thoughts on the operational model, and would you say that you would replicate this model for future massive infrastructure projects of House Office Building renovations.

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure.

With the Cannon, we learned a lot of lessons on the best way to go about a project at that time. I understand why they did the Cannon in the way they did, because of the restrictions when it came to swing space. That is something I do not think they were ready to face at the time, and I think we need to face it with future large programs.

Because by doing Cannon in multiple small phases that were tied to the congressional move cycle, that created a lot of inefficiencies, as the contractors had to mobilize and demobilize and we had to move the Members of Congress around and we had to break it up into all these small chunks. It was not very efficient.

From a large, wave-top-level perspective, we would like to do these kind of projects in fewer but larger phases and not tie them to the congressional move cycle.

The downside of that is, I have to enable the mission of Congress to do their constitutional duties, which means I have to find you swing space that meets the unique needs of Members of Congress, and that is a challenge. We talked a little bit earlier about the swing space study that we will be presenting next month to this Committee and our other stakeholders. That is certainly a challenge that we are going to have with the new larger projects.

We have some other things that I would like to speak about very quickly if I could, which is just: When it came to Cannon, I think that we did not have a good handle on what we call the "program

of requirements,” everything we wanted to do. Once we started construction, I think we got some people’s attention, and then we had scope creep and changes.

Being able to get the design more fully and then put very strong structure around change management is a lesson that I would like to apply to future projects like this. Because once you open that aperture, especially once construction has started, costs can escalate out of control.

Mrs. BICE. Did you see that with the Cannon renewal?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I only have fairly short legs with the Cannon renewal. In fact—

Mrs. BICE. Right.

Mr. AUSTIN [continuing]. I just, as of yesterday, came out of my cooling-off period for Cannon, because I actually had worked as a contractor.

Now that I can speak more fully about it, I did see that we had some issues where, sort of, the good ideas came way late in the project. I understand why they wanted them, but some of these things needed to be fleshed out during the design process, not while it was under construction. It is so much cheaper to do this while you are in design than trying to shoehorn it in during construction.

I saw some of this, but anecdotally and from the lessons learned I have seen from previous phases—because we are now on phase 4 of four, which is actually the fifth, because we had a phase 0. I saw that certainly with the AARs from phases 1 and 2. That was an issue for those two phases.

Mrs. BICE. Certainly we are, you know, at least, you know, doing studies on what the campus may need in the future from a space requirement perspective, and having that insight, I think, would be incredibly helpful as we move forward.

A quick last question, if I may. When do you expect the scaffolding to come down, the crane, and to open up the parking garage in Cannon?

Mr. AUSTIN. The scaffolding—the crane is less than 60 days from being removed right now.

The scaffolding by the end of this summer will all be down. In fact, we have retrograded most of the scaffolding already, but there is additional scaffolding which will come down this summer.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you so much for everything that you have done for the institution. We appreciate your time.

With that, Mr. Chair, I yield.

Chairman STEIL. We all look forward to the scaffolding going away.

Mr. Carey is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CAREY. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank the Ranking Member.

I have a deep appreciation of history and architecture, and I have nothing but the utmost appreciation for the task that the AOC has, believe me. It is one of the hardest roles to play here on Capitol Hill, as you are finding out—a job that never stops, which includes everything from House Office Building renovations, the constant restoration of the Capitol and the Supreme Court, to the

repair of the original Longworth furniture that actually sits in my office. I appreciate that.

I do want to say, the vital functions of the AOC make it all the more important that the agency be proper stewards of taxpayer dollars and properly execute the responsibility in a timely, effective, and respectful manner.

Mr. Austin, you took over a troubling situation from the AOC when you began your role in 2024. During the COVID-19 pandemic and up through the tenure of the former Architect, there were major reports of poor workplace culture among AOC employees. The situation led to the diminished work in the product and a growing untrust of the AOC by the Members of Congress.

Can you kind of just walk us through some of the changes that you have already implemented and what you see moving forward?

Mr. AUSTIN. Sure. There have been a lot of changes.

One of the things I said when I was being interviewed for this project—or, excuse me, when I was being interviewed for this role was, I knew that I would need to be walking into a lot of spaces and meeting a lot of faces and talking to a lot of people.

I certainly have done that. I think my EA told me I have done 65 office visits so far, 65 workshop visits, including more than a dozen night-shift visits. In fact, my first visit was to the night-shift custodial team on the Senate side. I was happy to do so because I wanted to hear directly from them what their issues were and how they saw that culture in the AOC that you spoke about.

I will say, overall, for this agency, if we are talking culture, I think this is a fantastic organization filled with committed people who know that this job is more than just a paycheck, it is a calling, it is a connection to a higher mission. I feel so blessed to be part of them, and I kind of pinch myself every day that I get to lead this organization.

Certainly I did a lot of engagements with the workforce, with my senior leadership. The Chairman spoke in his comments about the senior leaders when I first got here. Nearly a third of my senior leadership was vacant or in temporary positions. As of the 7th of July when I welcome my new IG, that will be down to 1 position—

Mr. CAREY. Awesome.

Mr. AUSTIN [continuing]. so 1 of 34. In fact, that is sort of self-imposed since I promoted—or, after a competitive process, my deputy in the Capitol Building was promoted to the executive director.

Engaging with the workforce, letting them know that they had a conduit to speak to me, letting them know that we had stability and that we were recommitted to that mission and that they had ethical leadership was very important to me, and I hope that I have at least taken a few steps in that direction.

I think we can see that in some empirical measures, with our FEVS survey that came back, with the results, but also with our attrition rate that is down more than 2½ percent since I took this role, and we are now well below the industry standard for that.

Mr. CAREY. As I have said before, the historic preservation of the Capitol complex is, you know, very important to me. The effective operation of the AOC is of great importance to me as well.

Looking forward, what are some of AOC's major opportunities for growth?

Mr. AUSTIN. For growth, I think—as far as for the growth of the program—

Mr. CAREY. Uh-huh.

Mr. AUSTIN [continuing]. I have spoken a little bit about this as far as where we are with our capital renewal, which we have been speaking about, with the Rayburn renewal program. We are also looking at those other pieces of our Capitol Campus Blueprint, which is the Senate side, the Capitol Police Headquarters, as well as utility resiliency. Those all kind of go into enabling the mission of Congress, which is to do their constitutional duties.

Where we have taken that is, we are focused very closely on getting the Capitol Campus Plan in place. We are engaging with Members of this Committee, Members of Appropriations as far as what that is going to be.

It is a big program. It is a 15- to 25-year program, depending on how we do it. It is going to be expensive. It is going to be disruptive. It is also very, very much needed in order to ensure these facilities are usable for Congress well into the future.

Mr. CAREY. I want to thank you for your time and your testimony today.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

This concludes our questions.

I would like to thank our witness for appearing before us today. It has been a great conversation.

Members of the Committee may have some additional questions for you, and we ask that you please respond to those questions in writing.

Without objection, each Member will have 5 legislative days to insert additional material into the record or to revise and extend their remarks.

If there is no further business, I thank the Members for their participation.

Without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:58 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

**QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD**



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COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

**Full Committee Hearing: "Oversight of the Architect of the Capitol: A Review of  
the Thirteenth Architect's First Year"**

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**Questions for the Record - 119<sup>th</sup> Congress**

June 25, 2025

**Majority Questions for the Record**

**Question 1:** I met with a constituent who brought up the lack of adult changing stations for disabled adults in federal buildings. Their concern is that none of the federal buildings in D.C. can accommodate a disabled adult who needs to change diapers or clothes, resulting in the family having to change their adult child outside behind a bush. Do you have any thoughts on how Congress could work to help implement these adult changing stations in future federal buildings being built?

**Answer:** The Architect of the Capitol is committed to addressing barriers to access for all visitors, staff, and Members. We recognize, however, that constructing facilities, whether it be in an existing building or a new one, fit for universal changing stations is a complex endeavor. For example, these facilities require a space significantly larger than a standard single-stall disability-accessible restroom, as well as equipment and fixtures not typically found in a standard restroom. To evaluate the installation of adult changing facilities on existing infrastructure on the Capitol campus, the AOC would need to complete a feasibility study. This study would include a review of locations, as well as the necessary structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing renovations to accommodate the table's movement, load capacity, and overall functionality.

For new buildings, among other factors, constructing universal adult changing stations should be included in the design phase of the project and captured in the cost estimates.

**Question 2:** I know over the last couple years there have been laws in place directing the Architect of the Capitol to develop action plans on data storage. I'm supportive of that because we need to make sure that we are careful with the data that underpins our Capitol campus. However, there have been delays in this process. Can you please explain what the plan is and what the timeline is to complete this plan?

**Answer:** As requested by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, the Architect of the Capitol has developed a comprehensive plan to address data storage and will continue to provide updates to the Committee on the progress of implementing this plan. We have completed the migration to Microsoft 365, representing significant progress toward the goals outlined in CHA's 2024 letter to Legislative Branch agencies for data storage security. To support further progress, the AOC is also modernizing its primary data centers, which is in-line with the stated goals.

Additionally, the AOC has made significant enhancements to the Offsite Facility to improve the operational capabilities of that site, which is consistent with the congressionally-mandated Tier III-equivalent standards. The funding to relocate an AOC data center to a Tier III-equivalent facility that is outside the National Capitol Region has not been secured. The AOC is working with other Legislative Branch agency partners to discuss, review and coordinate site surveys and evaluation of potential locations which meet congressional directives in the FY 2022 and FY 2023 Legislative Branch report language. We will continue to provide the Committee periodic updates.

### Minority Questions for the Record

**Question 1:** Please provide a list of all planned repairs, projects, improvements, and initiatives the AOC has cancelled, rescope or deferred due to the AOC's FY 2025 funding level, which represents a 12 percent cut from the FY 2024 level.

**Answer:** The attached spreadsheet (attachment 1) lists AOC projects which were reduced or remained unfunded under the FY 2025 Full Year Continuing Resolution (CR). In addition to the noted project impacts, the AOC experienced significant reductions to our Operating Budget due to inflation and mandatory cost increases such as cost-of-living and employee health benefits.

**Question 2:** Please provide a list of all planned repairs, projects, improvements and initiatives the AOC would need to cancel, rescope or defer if the FY 2026 Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, as reported by the House Appropriations Committee on June 26, 2025, is enacted.

**Answer:** The attached spreadsheet (attachment 2) lists AOC projects which would need to be reduced or remain unfunded if the FY 2026 Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, as reported by the House Appropriations Committee on June 26, 2025, is enacted.

**Question 3:** How would Congress failing to fund the AOC at its requested level affect its ability to respond to Member maintenance requests?

**Answer:** If the Architect of the Capitol is funded below its requested level for FY 2026, we would prioritize maintenance efforts focusing solely on impacts to occupant safety and continuity of operations. Services provided to Members, however, may be reduced, and response times or durations may increase due to inadequate staffing levels. Additionally, the AOC may need to shift from proactive, preventative maintenance to a "breakdown maintenance" model. This would increase the frequency and severity of unexpected and disruptive equipment failures across essential systems—including heating, cooling, power and elevators—negatively impacting congressional operations. The service life of major systems such as air conditioning and elevators is shortened when operating in breakdown maintenance mode. The list of deferred maintenance would also continue to grow, creating a significant backlog of projects that would likely require far greater investment in future years to prevent widespread system failures. This will also accelerate the timeline for full facility renewals as the useful life of major mechanical and electrical components are shortened due to lack of maintenance.

**Question 4:** Past Architects were appointed by—and served at the pleasure of—the President. But last Congress, this Committee passed legislation that vested this authority in the legislative branch. How has this independence helped you in your first year?

**Answer:** As Architect of the Capitol, I have the honor and pleasure of carrying out the mission of the agency as directed by Congress. I was selected for this position after the

enactment of the Architect of the Capitol Appointment Act. I appreciate that this legislation clarifies the AOC's lines of reporting and responsibility. I look forward to continuing to support Congress through the preservation, maintenance and renovation of the Capitol campus facilities.

**Question 5:** How, if at all, do incidents of political violence that occur off campus or outside D.C. affect the way you approach physical security on campus?

**Answer:** The Architect of the Capitol monitors incidents of political violence occurring off campus or outside the National Capital Region (NCR) through the U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) Command Center, and as appropriate, issues alerts and notices to AOC staff. The USCP briefs these incidents to the Capitol Police Board, where recommendations are evaluated to mitigate physical security concerns on campus and enhance protection to Members, staff, and visitors. The AOC provides support for requested mitigation efforts (e.g., erecting anti-scale/parade fences, jersey barriers, mobile vehicle barriers, etc.).

**Question 6:** What additional resources do you require to fulfill the AOC's security-related obligations?

**Answer:** Security is a key priority for the Architect of the Capitol. The AOC requires the requested FY 2026 funding to be able to support U.S. Capitol Police's (USCP's) security infrastructure plans. With the support of this subcommittee and oversight committees, and in coordination with the USCP, the AOC has made significant progress over the past few years and will continue to improve the security posture across the campus. The AOC appreciates the funding it has received to execute important security projects around campus, to include windows and doors, a new screening facility for the House side of the Capitol, expansion of the security perimeter, and enhanced lighting around the Capitol campus.

As an active participant in the USCP Security Working Groups, which are part of the Capitol Police Board (Board) governance structure, the AOC provides frequent updates to physical security projects being managed on the campus. The AOC develops these projects based on client requirements from the House Sergeant at Arms, the Senate Sergeant at Arms, the USCP, other security stakeholders and Board decisions.

The AOC also maintains existing security infrastructure, including vehicle barriers and security kiosks. To continue this work, the AOC requires an annual funding stream to replace aged and failing barriers and kiosks. The AOC has also requested no-year funding in FY 2026 to adequately support emergent requirements, including perimeter fencing outside of our normal planning work consistent with Capitol Police Board and Joint Congressional Continuity Board requirements, and other unknown security, resilience, and recovery operations.

Additionally, the AOC supports USCP as they add and enhance security infrastructure in facilities and around campus. The USCP identifies projects, and AOC often provides power and pathways for USCP devices and communications cabling.

**Question 7:** When will the Cannon building be ready for full occupancy?

**Answer:** As of December 2024, all four sides of the Cannon building are occupied, enabling movement around the building for the first time since 2017. The Phase 4 Substantial Completion date is February 12, 2026, and the Final Completion date is March 16, 2026. The majority of projects remaining are exterior items, including the courtyard fountain and landscaping, an electrical vault and replacement of the trash enclosure. We anticipate that most of this work will be completed by December 31, 2025; however, some work along First Street, including the electrical vault and the southeast terrace, will extend into the first quarter of 2026.

**Question 8:** Prior to Cannon, when was the last major House office building renovation? How regularly should we be renovating our office buildings?

**Answer:** The Architect of the Capitol is not aware of any similar building-wide renovation of a House office building prior to the Cannon Renewal project. Previous projects were limited to specific systems or local repairs. Generally, comprehensive renewals for buildings such as the House office buildings should occur every 30 to 50 years. This timeframe, however, is highly dependent on the original construction, intensity of use, evolving needs, current condition, and other factors.

Today, the AOC faces a substantial and growing backlog of deferred maintenance and capital renewal, crucial to keeping historic facilities operational and enabling the performance of vital constitutional functions. This backlog is further exacerbated by the decrease in AOC's operating budget which increases the risk of major component failures. The demands on the campus continue to grow-- from enhancing security and safety for daily users to accommodating millions of visitors each year and supporting the needs of Congress and the Supreme Court. The most pressing challenge is renewing the Rayburn House Office Building (RHOB). The RHOB, constructed in the 1960s, suffers from age-related deterioration. RHOB's systems are in a more fragile state than other major buildings on the Capitol campus, thus more likely to fail. For example, since 2023, RHOB has had 25 major water leaks resulting in \$2 million in repair costs compared to \$300,000 in repair costs for water leaks in Longworth House Office Building (LHOB). The systems contain more hazardous materials than other office buildings on campus. Additionally, the RHOB has not had a major building system renovation since constructed. In addition, the Senate also faces increasing demands for space to support vital governmental functions.

The Capitol Complex Master Plan establishes clear priorities and strategic capital investments based on aging infrastructure and Congressional input. It outlines funding options that consider total ownership costs ensuring that the Capitol campus is prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the next 20 to 50 years. Failure to

address this backlog will lead to accelerated deterioration of historic structures, decreased service life of major facility systems, and greater risks of major facility outages. Delays in upgrading infrastructure greatly increase the risk of disrupting critical Congressional functions and compromising security. Timely investment is necessary to prevent catastrophic and/or much more costly issues in the future.

**Question 9:** You noted that AOC is applying lessons learned from the Cannon Renewal project to future capital renewal efforts, such as taking a more thorough approach to the design phase of the upcoming Rayburn renewal project:

- a) What other aspects of AOC's approach to the Cannon project, whether contractor management, phasing, or staffing, do you think are worth repeating for future projects like the Rayburn Swing Space?
- b) How has the closeout of the Cannon project shaped your approach to contractor management in major capital renewal projects?
- c) Please provide a brief explanation for why the AOC recommends proceeding with a Rayburn renovation before a Longworth renovation.

**Answer:**

a and b) As a steward of the historic and vital buildings that make up the Capitol campus, cost-effectiveness is always at the forefront of any Architect of the Capitol project. After each phase of the Cannon House Office Building Renewal (CHOBr), we held meetings with the construction team and contractors. As we close out the final phase on the CHOBr, we are formalizing the lessons learned over the life of the project into a comprehensive document. This document will span project inception, budget development, design, construction, and closeout. All aspects of CHOBr will be brought into AOC's approach to future large-scale projects on the Capitol campus.

One major lesson learned that we will take into future major renewals is the execution of the project(s) in fewer phases. Executing full facility renovations in phases of two-year increments to synchronize with Congressional moves impacts the program in multiple ways. Shorter duration phases results in construction adjacent to occupied offices and this negatively impacts both Congressional operations and construction efforts. A plan which relies on internal swing space to accommodate displaced offices/staff congests operations and sets the conditions for construction work to be adjacent to Congressional operations. A more efficient model is to have swing space for displaced Congressional offices in an office building separate from construction activities. Construction periods with longer than two-year phases coupled with non-adjacent swing space, strict change management, excellent coordination, and strong lines of communication will yield a cost-effective renovation program with higher efficiency and reduced client impact.

c) The industry uses a Facility Condition Index (FCI) to determine the condition of buildings. The FCI is a metric determined by a Facility Condition Assessment (FCA), which provides a snapshot of a facility's condition. Based on the FCI, buildings on campus are placed into tiers ranked on their criticality to Congress' ability to carry out its constitutional duties. The Rayburn House Office Building (RHOB), constructed in the 1960s, suffers from age-related deterioration. RHOB's systems are in a more fragile state thus more likely to fail. For example, since 2023, RHOB has had 25 major water leaks resulting in \$2 million in repair costs compared to \$300,000 in repair costs for water leaks in Longworth House Office Building (LHOB). The RHOB has also had a much higher rate of mechanical system failures, elevator outages, and electrical problems (including fires) that increase the urgency of this renewal above other structures. The Rayburn systems contain more hazardous materials than other office buildings on campus. While the LHOB is an older facility, constructed in the 1930s, with aging systems, the degree of system failure and impact on Members is lower than that of the RHOB. Additionally, the RHOB has not had a major building system renovation since constructed whereas the LHOB has undergone three renovations over the past few decades.

**Question 10:** Have you consulted with the Sergeant at Arms and Capitol Police on security considerations related to both swing space planning and the Rayburn renovation project generally? Do you commit to consulting with them and all other institutional stakeholders when designing a potential Rayburn renovation?

**Answer:** The Architect of the Capitol continues to work on its Capitol Complex Master Plan (CCMP) which will provide a comprehensive 20-year framework designed to guide future growth, optimize resource use, and extend the lifespan of all facilities managed by the AOC. The full CCMP is expected to be finalized in 2026 but some phases have already been completed. Throughout this process, collaboration and engagement with the Sergeant at Arms, Capitol Police, and other institutional stakeholders has been critical and will continue to ensure all requirements are fully incorporated.

House office buildings is one part of the CCMP and we appreciate the support we have received from the Committee with the Rayburn Swing Space and potential renovation. With your guidance, the AOC was able to complete the Rayburn Swing Space study this year and looks forward to providing you with that information and future discussions on potential scenarios. We will continue to engage and work with other key stakeholders throughout this process.

**Question 11:** The House has 441 Members compared to the Senate's 100, and significantly more staff. Do buildings with more occupants generally experience more wear and tear than buildings with fewer occupants?

**Answer:** Generally more users in a facility result in more wear and tear particularly on building finishes. Many factors including occupant loading, type and quality of finish selection for high traffic areas, funding level and therefore service level on custodial

efforts and building system maintenance contribute to facility degradation. A programmatic approach to facility management which includes periodic inspections, multi-year minor construction and capital improvements / revitalization plans, and deliberate routine maintenance and custodial service yield high quality facilities with extended service lives.

**Question 12:** In your testimony you noted how a lack of adequate funding leads to a growing deferred maintenance backlog for Capitol facilities—creating risks for critical systems such as fire suppression, air handling and plumbing.

- a) The Modernization and Innovation Subcommittee is working with the House Chief Administrative Officer to streamline the way by which Members and staff submit service requests to the AOC. Do you commit to work with the Subcommittee and CAO on this project?
- b) What are the recent trends in response and repair times for work orders across the House buildings? Have they increased or decreased over the last three years?
- c) What steps has AOC taken to improve time from complaint to resolution since you were appointed?
- d) Does AOC use predictive maintenance to identify issues before they escalate?

**Answer:**

- a) Yes, the Architect of the Capitol's House Office Buildings (HOB) jurisdiction and House Chief Administrative Office (CAO) are working together to streamline the service requests process. The HOB and CAO developed a pilot program to test a new feature on the CAO's My Service Request portal, which allows Members and staff to report maintenance issues to the AOC. The pilot program was launched in September 2025 and will be tested over the next several months.
- b) The time between submitting a work order request to the AOC and completion of work has decreased by half over the past three years. The time from request to completion for corrective maintenance averages about three days to complete and critical work orders average one and a half days.
- c) The HOB has implemented multiple measures to shorten the time from work order submittal to resolution and improve overall service quality. The work orders are reviewed and prioritized by severity, recurrence, and operational impact ensuring that immediate risks are resolved first.

Upon completion of work orders, we automatically send email surveys and provide leave-behind service cards seeking feedback. Periodically we conduct personal follow-ups seeking to deliver high quality service. We utilize facility management data to determine equipment / system failure trends and we analyze client feedback in order to pinpoint areas for improvement.

- d) To assist in addressing challenges of aging historic infrastructure, the AOC is developing an Enterprise Asset Management system to create an enhanced organized method for managing, coordinating and overseeing asset-related activities throughout their respective lifecycles. A well-developed asset management system will offer more detailed insights to enhance data-driven financial decisions and prioritization of projects aimed at reducing our very significant and growing backlog.

**Question 13:** The reliability of everyday amenities such as bathrooms and elevators makes a major difference for Members, staff, and visitors in House office buildings.

- a) How many elevator outages have been reported in House office buildings in FY2025 to date?
- b) What is the average repair time for elevators in the following areas of responsibility, from outage to remediation? (1) House office buildings, (2) Senate office buildings, (3) the Capitol and CVC, (4) the Library of Congress, and (5) the Supreme Court
- c) What measures does AOC implement to minimize disruption from bathroom repairs and renovation?

**Answer:**

- a) Typically, 90 percent or more of all elevators are operable on any given day across the whole campus. For the House office buildings' 85 elevators, there have been 492 work orders for non-operable elevators in 2025 to date.
- b) The average repair time for elevators across the Capitol campus is dependent on several factors, which includes the type of repair, the extent of work to be completed and the parts needed. All of the Architect of the Capitol's jurisdictions utilize the elevator maintenance service contract for any repairs that exceed organic elevator mechanics' technical capabilities. Furthermore, while the functionality of an elevator may be temporarily interrupted, our elevators are routinely inspected for safety concerns.
- The House office buildings have a total of 85 elevators, 28 escalators and the Rayburn underground subway system. The House office buildings experience

fewer outages and faster repair times than industry averages.

Simple repairs, such as fixing broken buttons or resetting a held door, are completed by HOB's in-house mechanics and can typically be completed in a few hours or less. Complex repairs, such as welding, re-roping and re-tensioning, however, are dependent on the contractor's availability and the congressional schedule. Furthermore, some repairs may be delayed due to the availability of parts. Frequently replaced parts are kept in stock for quick repairs, but unusual or larger repairs may require parts to be ordered. Also, the House office buildings conveyance systems are antiquated and many parts are no longer manufactured. In such situations, we must special-order parts for fabrication which can add months to the repair schedule.

We requested funding in our FY 2026 budget for preventative maintenance and modernization as well. Specifically, we requested funding to continue the House Conveyance System Modernization Program to allow us to be proactive with our maintenance and repairs and upgrade critical components over a 20-year period. The funding would also allow us to replace the network control systems in the House elevators providing our staff with the capability to monitor operations remotely. Our staff would be notified in real time if an elevator malfunctions, decreasing the initial response time. These new systems would also bring the elevators in compliance with cybersecurity requirements.

- The Senate office buildings have 44 elevators and one escalator. Between one and four elevators may be offline during the course of a week. Typically, the elevators are out of service for short periods of time and not all at the same time. If AOC personnel can address the issue with materials available on hand, the outages typically last between 15 minutes and several hours. For issues that are beyond the elevator shop's capabilities or we need to order parts, outages have lasted between several days and up to almost two years. For example, Dirksen Elevator 10 was offline for two years after multiple repair attempts of the existing equipment and parts. Ultimately, the elevator maintenance service contract was used to modernize Dirksen Elevator 10.

AOC's Senate Office Buildings (SOB) jurisdiction has an ongoing elevator modernization program which includes taking two elevators offline simultaneously for a duration of approximately six months. Currently, the Senate elevator modernization program is completing four elevator modernizations every 12 months. As SOB modernizes our elevators, the controllers and the elevator machines are being replaced. We track the age

for key components to determine maintenance and modernization actions.

- For the Capitol Building and CVC, while in session, down-time due to unexpected repairs or maintenance is approximately one hour. To troubleshoot and repair major mechanical issues, the average repair time is one to three weeks.
- The Library of Congress buildings have 64 elevators. The average time to repair elevators within the Library of Congress facilities can vary greatly and depends on the type of failure. Most minor issues can be repaired by the AOC's Library Buildings and Grounds (LBG) jurisdiction elevator shop in a few hours. Issues that are beyond the elevator shop's capabilities or require ordering materials can cause outages from several weeks to up to a year for major contracted repair efforts.

For elevator control systems issues, LBG occasionally leverages manufacturer technical assistance. Many of LBG's older systems are obsolete without manufacturer parts or technical support.

The majority of LOC elevators will require modernization efforts in the coming years. There is a high rate of failure with the older systems and critical replacement parts are no longer being manufactured. Additionally, technical support for troubleshooting is being phased out from the manufacturer for the older equipment. Currently, one Madison elevator and two Adams elevators are out of service due to obsolete controller failures and the AOC is coordinating with the manufacturer on repair options. Repair duration is unknown at this time.

- At the Supreme Court, minor repairs can typically be completed in a few hours. These include repairing light fixtures, lights on the control panel, and hall call buttons, as well as addressing door operator issues. Major repairs to elevator system components may be completed in several days to weeks, depending on the availability of parts, as well as the type and extent of the damage.
- c) The AOC is committed to minimizing disruption and ensuring a positive outcome for all bathroom repairs and renovations. Our strategy includes:
- Rapid response: For common issues, we maintain a ready supply of spare parts to ensure that repairs are completed as quickly as possible.
  - Thorough and safe protocols: In cases involving more complex issues, such as leaking pipes, our teams follow stringent protocols. This includes safely handling hazardous materials, conducting necessary

demolition with care, and performing comprehensive testing to ensure the repair is fully complete before restoration begins.

- Clear coordination: When a utility outage is required, we ensure all necessary steps are coordinated efficiently to minimize the outage's duration and impact on congressional operations

**Question 14:** Has the AOC seen measurable results from the smart trap system and the broader Integrated Pest Management Program? As new vendors take over food service for the House, do you intend to renovate or redesign kitchen and food preparation areas to support future resilience against pests?

**Answer:** On November 11, 2024, the AOC's House Office Buildings (HOB) jurisdiction implemented the "Smart Trap" system in the Rayburn sub-basement. This location was selected due to its historically high pest activity levels, particularly within the Member storeroom areas. Since its installation, the system has documented a total of approximately 49 captures, with an additional 21 rodents detected during inspections and subsequently removed.

Considering our knowledge of rodent breeding behaviors and the potential for infestations to establish, this data suggests a notable success in preventing population growth. Furthermore, there has been a significant decline in activity over the last quarter (July to September 2025), which indicates that the system has effectively contributed to improved containment and a reduction in rodent populations within the monitored area.

Considering this success with decreasing activity in the initial installation zone, HOB will consider the deployment of additional Smart Traps in adjacent areas that currently exhibit high levels of rodent activity. This strategic expansion aims to achieve enhanced results and further improve the effectiveness of the system.

Regarding the recent food service renovations across the House office buildings, the Office of the Attending Physician (OAP), Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and AOC partnered to identify and address vulnerable entry points for pests such as holes in walls, ceilings, cabinets and door frames. Mass trapping from the pest control contractor and thorough cleaning efforts were completed while spaces were vacant prior to food service vendor occupancy. This resulted in a decrease in pest activity in food service areas since the new vendors opened.

**Question 15:** Does the AOC have a contract with the CAO to facilitate installation of equipment and utilities for the House's incoming food service vendors?

**Answer:** As part of the House kitchen and exhaust renovation, the AOC's Capitol Building jurisdiction has worked closely with the Office of the Attending Physician (OAP) and Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) over the past year to review all equipment in the proposed construction contract. When the kitchen is reopened in 2027, all equipment will be aligned with CAO expectations and requirements.

AOC and CAO have finalized a Memorandum of Understanding for food service equipment operations and maintenance. As CAO changed its food service vendors during the 2025 congressional recess period, the AOC and CAO partnered in facility design efforts, demolition, infrastructure fit-out, and restaurant equipment installation across the five House office buildings. As of September 2025, 19 new food service locations have been successfully opened, and three locations are in final design review.

**Question 16:** When you were appointed Architect, you took over an agency with a near-vacant C-Suite and a workplace culture considered toxic by many. What have you done over the last year to fill out your leadership team and build a culture of professionalism and respect at the AOC?

**Answer:** When I joined the AOC in June 2024, more than a third of executive-level positions were acting or interim staff. Now, all executive-level positions have been filled by permanent, full-time employees. With the proper leaders in place, the AOC has addressed and closed most of our open AOC Inspector General recommendations and is working proactively to update outdated policies. Additionally, one of my top priorities is close communication with AOC staff, which I believe is essential to building and maintaining faith and confidence in our agency's leadership. Whether discussing the particulars of everyday operations or our broader visions for the future of the agency, I am equally committed to practicing clear and timely communication that ensures accountability and coordination with this Subcommittee, Congress and AOC-internal entities. In furtherance of this effort, I have conducted two agency-wide series of AOC Employee Town Halls and conducted over 80 visits with my teams and shops as well as attending over a dozen All Hands meetings. Additionally, I conduct weekly walk-throughs to visit our staff from various offices and jurisdictions, hearing their concerns firsthand. In addition to my weekly meetings with my senior leaders, we also held two offsite leadership sessions where we addressed my vision for the agency to include the conduct expected of all leaders in the AOC. We have reviewed the results of the most recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and held periodic meetings with every jurisdiction on how we are addressing those findings. Additionally, we briefed out the findings from the FEVS at the All Hands meetings and our efforts to address them.

By filling the senior vacancies with exceptional leaders, addressing employee concerns openly and transparently, providing a vision for the future of the agency, and engaging personally with the workforce, I believe we are slowly regaining the trust and confidence of the workforce as well as re-establishing a culture of respect and professionalism throughout the AOC.

**Question 17:** Recruitment and retention are ongoing concerns for an agency like AOC, which requires a variety of skilled tradespeople and project managers. What initiatives have you launched to attract and keep talent at AOC?

**Answer:** To combat the increasing challenges in recruitment, the Architect of the Capitol has developed and implemented several strategies to enhance our talent acquisition effectiveness. First, we have substantially decreased our time-to-hire rate

from 120 days to less than 80 days exceeding the Office of Personnel Management's standard. Additionally, we utilize creative marketing and increased outreach and engagement with trade schools and educational institutions throughout the region to raise awareness of AOC's career opportunities. We have partnered with nationally recognized trade organizations, advertising AOC careers and hard-to-fill positions. We continue to build a robust resume database for direct hire and future job opportunities. In today's modern job market, we also utilize social media for recruitment purposes. More than 18k total job seekers accessed AOC's LinkedIn Recruiter tool to apply for open positions in FY25. These efforts have substantially decreased our vacancy rate as we recruit highly skilled candidates and skilled tradespersons. Our current vacancy rate is approximately 6%. Utilizing these talent acquisition strategies will streamline recruitment efforts by reducing the time to hire, providing high-quality applicant pools, and leveraging actionable data to address any barriers to the current recruitment process.

The AOC is committed to retaining high-potential and high-performing employees. We recognize that we need to enhance pay particularly for our skilled trades employees to incentivize their retention and remain competitive in the local labor market. In FY 2025, an agency-wide in-depth analysis was conducted to ensure that positions were properly graded and job duties were consistent with the Office of Personnel Management's position classification standards. This review resulted in upgrades for some positions as well as promotions for employees currently filling those positions. We have revised the AOC's training policy to allow greater flexibility in selecting annual training providing more opportunities for career and skill development. We launched the Architect's Apprenticeship Program which will provide structured upskilling and cross-training opportunities allowing current employees in career-limiting positions to enhance their technical knowledge and potentially transition from non-skilled to skilled trades roles. Finally, we successfully launched a formal Mentorship Program in FY 2025 as an additional resource for employee development and retention designed to strengthen knowledge sharing across the agency, promote leadership development, and enhance employee engagement. Over time, this initiative is expected to build a more connected, skilled and future-ready organization. Through this program, the AOC continues to prioritize and expand meaningful development pathways for its employees, ensuring a workplace culture where individuals feel supported, challenged and empowered to grow and thrive.

**Question 18:** In 2022, Congress mandated the creation and display of an honorary plaque recognizing law enforcement and staff who defended the Capitol on January 6. Though the plaque was completed years ago, and Federal law required its display at the Capitol by March 2023, it remains inaccessible to the public.

- a) Why hasn't the plaque been installed?
- b) All relevant congressional committees have approved installation of the plaque. What further instruction, direction, or guidance—and from whom—do you require to install it?

**Answer:**

- a) The Architect of the Capitol stands ready to install the plaque when directed.
- b) The direction for any modifications on the House side of the campus or on the House side of the Capitol Building must come from the Speaker of the House.

