

**STATEMENT OF STEPHEN T. AYERS, AIA, LEED AP
Nominee for Architect of the Capitol**

**Before the Committee on Rules and Administration
United States Senate**

April 15, 2010

Mr. Chairman, Senator Bennett, members of the Committee, it is a wonderful honor and privilege for me to be here today as the Presidential nominee for the position of Architect of the Capitol. I want to extend my sincerest thanks and gratitude to all of the Members of the Nominating Committee for recommending me to President Obama to serve as the 11th Architect of the Capitol. I am deeply honored, and I truly appreciate the trust that the Congress and the President have placed in me.

I am joined here today by my wife, Jennifer, and my terrific children, Stephanie and Nick, as well as my parents, Ben and Jane, my brother, Ben, my sister, Jennifer, and mother- and father-in-law, Chuck and Shirl. It is because of their love and support that I have been able to pursue a career in public service, and I appreciate their taking the journey with me, and being here today to continue that support.

I have wanted to be an architect all of my life. As I made my way through school, I focused on this goal and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Architecture from the University of Maryland. After graduation, I joined the U.S. Air Force and attended Officers Training School. My service in the military was extremely rewarding both personally and professionally. I learned valuable lessons in leadership, integrity, loyalty, and service, which have benefitted me throughout my career. At this time, I also studied Management at the University of Southern California, receiving a Master of Science degree in 1988.

After five years as an active duty military officer, I joined the Voice of America as a General Engineer, and led design and construction efforts at several Voice of America sites in Greece and Germany. In 1997, I joined the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) as Assistant Superintendent for the Senate Office Buildings. I moved up the ranks over the next several years, and in March 2006, I became Deputy Architect and Chief Operating Officer. In February 2007, I became the Acting Architect of the Capitol.

It is in this role that I have been able to combine my two most important skills sets – that of being a licensed architect and experience using business management best practices. This position of Architect of the Capitol is about more than drafting blueprints. It's more akin to managing and maintaining a small city comprised entirely of iconic buildings, a rich history, and a notable infrastructure. As proud steward of the Capitol complex, the Architect protects the past by preserving the historic integrity of the U.S. Capitol. We are boldly working today to provide a safe and sustainable workplace, and we continue to build a legacy of professionalism and service for generations to come.

Over the past few years, our team has had a number of important achievements including the opening of the Capitol Visitor Center in December 2008, supporting the 56th Presidential Inaugural Ceremony in January 2009, and digging out after the historic blizzards in February. On a daily basis, we carry out numerous projects designed to save energy, provide modern facilities, and preserve the historic buildings and national treasures entrusted to our care.

Stewardship of the Capitol complex is important to me, the Congress, and the nation, and it is a unique challenge. This challenge is amplified by the historic significance and iconic nature of our buildings and landscape, aging physical infrastructure, and day-to-day operational requirements.

One of our most important challenges is a significant backlog of deferred maintenance and capital renewal projects – totaling in excess of \$1.5 billion over the next 10 years -- as well as security, life-safety and accessibility, and environmental requirements. Although every project on the list is necessary, we realize that not all can be funded in these fiscally-challenging times. We have begun addressing a number of deferred maintenance projects over the past few years, for example, the Utility Tunnel improvements; Dirksen Building infrastructure improvements; Rayburn Building roof replacement; Independence Avenue repaving; House Underground Garage repairs, and elevator modernization and high-voltage switchgear replacement campus-wide. However, these projects just skim the surface of this serious backlog.

To assist us in this effort, we have successfully developed and implemented a robust and balanced process to prioritize projects based on facilities' conditions and the level of maintenance required to ensure they remain functional and viable working environments for the Congress.

This process uses several tools in the formulation of the project prioritization list including Facility Condition Assessments, the Capitol Complex Master Plan, and Jurisdiction Plans. Over the past year, this process has matured to include a Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan, which examines phasing opportunities, project sequencing, and other factors to better facilitate the timing of the execution of major deferred maintenance and capital renewal projects. Tied into the overall planning process is the Line Item Construction Program. During this process, projects are scored against six criteria: preservation; regulatory compliance; mission; economics; security, and energy efficiency and environmental quality. We also take into consideration the challenge of executing required programs efficiently throughout this process.

The component that provides us and the Congress with the “big picture” — the 20-year look ahead to queue up the priorities, investments, and projects — is the Capitol Complex Master Plan. We have been working with Congress to develop the Master Plan, and its related Jurisdiction Plans. Jurisdiction Plans identify the “common denominators” which are short-term actions supporting future discretionary decisions about facility renewal requirements and new projects. For example, there may be instances where major, whole building renovations should be undertaken rather than a myriad of smaller projects. The Capitol Complex Master Plan assumes incremental decision making; leaving choices about future renewal and development to be made closer to the anticipated time when those decisions are needed.

The Capitol Complex Master Plan and the other prioritization tools we have developed and refined over the past few years provide Congress with concrete and practical assessments of our infrastructure. By using these tools, Congress can choose where best to make investments in the Capitol complex.

Within our organization, as Acting Architect, I have continued to invest in our most valuable assets – our employees. I set out to provide them with the right tools, equipment, and training to allow them to build on our successes and to be the best of the best. In that regard, I have implemented a number of programs providing greater workforce flexibilities including a telework program, a flexible work schedule program, and a student loan repayment program among other initiatives that they richly deserve.

Most importantly, I have worked to foster open communication and transparency with members of Congress, with our clients, and among colleagues within our organization. I believe open and honest communication is vitally important and is the key to building strong and productive relationships.

This year we will be updating our Strategic Plan to set new goals and priorities that will drive this organization for the next five years. Because we are responsible and accountable for our own results, we will continue to build on our achievements as well as learn from our experiences and from one another.

What makes the Office of the Architect of the Capitol unique is that in order to move forward to meet future challenges, we must protect and preserve the past – our nation’s past. This involves addressing the care and upkeep of aging buildings, while at the same time keeping pace with new facility maintenance and building technologies, reducing energy consumption and saving natural resources, as well as addressing increased security requirements.

Our long-term goals and priorities are designed to balance all of these requirements. For example, we take our responsibility to identify, quantify, and report to Congress the state of our facilities and the extent of the deferred maintenance backlog very seriously. Therefore, if confirmed, I will continue to refine our project prioritization process and work with Congress to determine where best to make investments in the Capitol complex. I will also use innovative technologies to ensure the U.S. Capitol remains the nation’s most visible and treasured icon of our government for centuries to come.

I am committed to using sustainable design practices whether we’re building a new facility or maintaining one that is 100 years old. One of our biggest challenges is preserving the historic elements of our buildings, while at the same time making them as energy efficient as possible.

With Congress’s support, we have implemented a number of programs and completed a variety of projects designed to save energy and conserve natural resources. For FY 2009, the Congress met its energy reduction goals for the fourth year in a row, and reduced energy consumption by 15.3 percent across the Capitol complex. This exceeded the FY 2009 requirement of a 12 percent reduction (as compared to the FY 2003 baseline). For Fiscal Year 2010, a 15 percent reduction is required under the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, (three percent reduction per year for a 30 percent reduction by 2015), and in FY 2011, an 18 percent reduction is required.

A few of the sustainable practices we have adopted include using low-impact materials, installing energy efficient equipment, incorporating durable and high-performance systems and materials, investing in renewable energy, and encouraging and supporting a culture that promotes reuse and recycling. This includes using food waste, garden clippings, and other green waste, and

repurposing it as compost for flower beds, and sustaining other plantings throughout the Capitol complex.

To better identify and evaluate energy savings opportunities in Capitol complex facilities, we have been using energy audits since FY 2007. The data collected help us realize better cost-benefit results, and determine where best to invest our resources.

In December, the AOC entered into an Energy Savings Performance Contract (ESPC) in the Senate Office Buildings. The project includes nearly \$42 million in facility infrastructure upgrades in the Hart, Dirksen, and Russell Senate Office Buildings, as well as the Senate Underground Garage, and Senate Employees' Child Care Facility. Highlights include installing energy-efficient lighting upgrades of nearly 31,000 fixtures in all buildings and integrating occupancy and daylight sensors; upgrading existing pneumatic and electric controls for heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems with direct digital controls; replacing existing transformers with high-efficiency transformers; and installing removable insulation covers for steam valves to reduce heat loss, improve comfort, and reduce the safety risks associated with the hot surfaces.

After we implement these energy conservation measures (over the 36-month construction period), we estimate that the Senate Office Buildings could realize a 36 percent reduction in total energy consumption, and approximately \$3.9 million in annual energy savings. Another example of our ongoing sustainability projects include the recent renovation of room G-50 in the Dirksen Building where we installed new LED light bulbs that use over 80 percent less electricity, give off less heat, and have a life expectancy of 30 years. In addition, the carpet and paint used in the room has low or no volatile organic compounds (VOCs). We also use low-VOC and other green cleaning products throughout the complex to ensure we maintain excellent indoor air quality.

Last year, the AOC also entered into ESPCs to implement energy savings projects in the House Office Buildings and the U.S. Capitol Building. The House contract includes nearly \$34 million in facility infrastructure upgrades, and the Capitol ESPC involves \$17 million in planned facility infrastructure upgrades. These public-private partnerships will help us achieve very significant energy reductions over the next several years.

We appreciate the support of the Senate Leadership, Chairman Schumer, and all of our Oversight Committees in our ongoing efforts to improve energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of the Capitol complex. You have made clear your commitment to reduce energy consumption, conserve natural resources, protect the environment, and in the long term, save taxpayer dollars.

To ensure that we continue to see a reduction in energy consumption, we are evaluating proven technologies that could be implemented in our continued effort to increase energy efficiencies across the Capitol complex. For example, because the Capitol Power Plant (CPP) plays a critical role in our long-term energy conservation strategy, we are continually working to improve and upgrade operations there. The CPP has served the Capitol complex very well since 1910, but in order to continue to provide services well into the future, it is time to transform the CPP and its operations. We started this transformation last February when we began using natural gas as the primary fuel source. We are now studying and evaluating potential technologies to implement at the CPP.

We recently completed our Strategic Long-Term Energy Plan, which will help to determine our future energy program planning, and explore various options for continued energy efficiencies. Among the options being considered are cogeneration, which simultaneously generates both electricity and heat, and the use of biofuels. Moving in a more sustainable direction at the CPP will enhance our efforts to meet the Energy Independence and Security Act and other energy reduction mandates as well as provide higher energy system security and reliability, and lower overall costs.

The AOC's mission is to serve Congress with a commitment to excellence, and we will continue to provide the expertise and services necessary to support the Congress in its work, and to ensure the American public has a welcoming, rich, and educational experience while visiting their nation's Capitol. In just the past three years, our work has been honored with more than 20 awards that recognize the high-quality, professional workmanship demonstrated by AOC staff who possess the special skills associated with quality craftsmanship from organizations such as the Washington Building Congress and the Construction Management Association of America. In addition, an overwhelming majority of our customers have consistently said they are satisfied or very satisfied with the services the AOC provides in our annual surveys. I won't be satisfied until we achieve a 100 percent satisfaction rating.

Mr. Chairman, the reason we consistently achieve these high marks is due to the dedicated, professional men and women of the AOC. I believe being the best attracts the best, and I am committed to providing our team with the best tools, training, and opportunities. Their efforts have put us on the path to success, and I am privileged to have the opportunity to work along side them every day.

The Architect of the Capitol has a long and rich history that dates back to the laying of the Capitol's cornerstone in 1793. Every brick, every floor tile, every element of the U.S. Capitol is saturated with our nation's art, history, and politics. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, the AOC is ready to do what is necessary to keep the Capitol complex open and operating every day of the year – under any circumstances.

The successes the Architect of the Capitol has realized over the past few years are due to both Congress's support and the dedication of our remarkable workforce. They are deeply committed to our mission to serve Congress and the American public, and I am extremely proud to be a part of the AOC team. Should this Committee recommend that I be confirmed by the full Senate, I will be honored to continue to work with these very talented professionals as the 11th Architect of the Capitol.

Thank you.