

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2008

Stephen T. Ayers, FAIA
Acting Architect of the Capitol
Room SB-15 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Ayers:

We are writing to express a concern we have regarding the possible incomplete historical content of some materials contained in the new Capitol Visitor Center (CVC), which is apparently scheduled to open to the public in December of this year.

We have been troubled to learn in recent weeks that some aspects of the new CVC, including displays, videos, and historic interpretations, may be historically incomplete and reflect an apathetic disposition toward our nation's religious history, historical events of a religious nature that took place in the Capitol, and the people of faith who played such an integral role in the founding of this nation and the history of the Capitol.

Moreover, it is clear that those who designed and developed the displays produced products excluding any significant references to God or faith, and produced a video introducing the facility focusing on the motto *E Pluribus Unum* and effectively substituting that motto for the current national motto, "In God We Trust." In fact, not only is our national motto, "In God We Trust," not a central theme of the CVC, it has been totally excluded from any effective presentation in an addition to the U.S. Capitol that is nearly three-quarters the size of the Capitol itself.

Although we have heard today unofficially that this omission of "In God We Trust" was an oversight, you can appreciate our concern that if such an enormous omission was missed on a structure as expansive as the CVC, there may be other similar omissions of equal concern.

We must acknowledge that other recent actions of the federal government have not served to allay our fears. Some of these actions include but are not limited to the following:

1. Your recent actions attempting to censor the word "God" from certificates that accompany flags flown over the Capitol building, and your suggestion that "God" should not be on federal buildings or government documents. As you recall, you initially refused the request of an Eagle Scout who wanted the certificate to read: "For my Grandfather, for his dedication and love of God, family and country." Your only objection was to the word "God."
2. The National Park Service's removal of a display inside the Washington Monument that explained the inscription at the top of the Monument that reads *Laus Deo*, or "Praise Be to God."
3. The Department of Veterans Affairs refusal to allow service members' families to voluntarily have service organizations or cemetery employees perform Funeral Honors and Memorial Honor Details reciting the 13 steps to fold an American flag at National Cemeteries, claiming it was a violation of the Establishment Clause of the Constitution because it referenced "God."
4. The decision by the U.S. mint in November 2006 to move the inscription "In God We Trust" from the face of the new Presidential dollar coin to the edge along with the year and the phrase *E Pluribus Unum*, and the Treasury's alleged accidental omission altogether of the words "In God We Trust" from the edge inscription of an unknown number of new George Washington dollar coins.

While we recognize and support any individual's right to disagree with the truth of statements made by our Founding Fathers, Presidents of the United States, Members of the House of Representatives, Members of the Senate, and those contained in U.S. treaties, state constitutions, the Declaration of Independence, the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag, and numerous official documents indicating a belief in God, it would be unfortunate to deny that these statements were made or that these events took place. They are so interwoven into the tapestry of American history that to omit them would unravel a rich history that deserves better.

Although we recognize that even a Visitor Center as massive as this one cannot contain every historical reference, some omitted facts are so glaringly obvious that to exclude them offers a distorted view of American history that is not acceptable to us and that we believe will ultimately not be acceptable to the American taxpayers. None of us should want to construct a \$621 million shrine to political correctness that does not accurately reflect a significant part of American history.

Therefore, we, the undersigned Members of Congress, pursuant to the Office of the Architect of the Capitol's rules of disclosure, hereby request that the Office of the Architect of the Capitol produce for inspection and copying at the offices of Congressman J. Randy Forbes (VA-04), or if mutually convenient, allow an appropriate time and place for the review and inspection of, the following:

All records and documents relating to any displayed content in the Capitol Visitor Center, including changes or additions to design or content that were made in response to requests from Members of Congress, as well as a list of all individuals or groups that consulted on such content and what, if any, changes or additions resulted from these discussions.

The term "document" includes, but is not limited to, any written, printed, typed, recorded, filmed, punched, transcribed, taped or other graphic matter of any kind or nature however produced or reproduced, whether sent or received, or neither, including the original, draft, copies and non-identical copies bearing notations or marks not found on the original, and includes, but is not limited to, all correspondence, records, electronic correspondence, electronic mail, drawings, memoranda, reports, analyses, computer generated reports and print-outs, other documents, which are in your custody, possession, and/or control or to which you otherwise have access.

Secondly, we request an on-the-record meeting with you and your key staff involved in developing the exhibits in the CVC, including Mr. Bernie Ungar, Ms. Terri Rouse, and Ms. Marty Sewell, Members of the Congressional Prayer Caucus and other Members of Congress, along with our expert witnesses, during the second week of September when Congress returns from the August recess.

We respectfully request that you notify us of your willingness to comply with these requests on or before August 11, 2008, so that we can determine what additional steps we must take. Realizing that it would be unreasonable for you to have to coordinate with each of us, we have designated Congressman J. Randy Forbes as our point of contact. He will coordinate the scheduling of meetings and the review and inspection of all materials for all members undersigned.

Thank you for your hard work and commitment to preserving the history of our U.S. Capitol in an accurate way that respects the rich history of our nation. We look forward to your response and to working with you in a manner that can make us all proud of our new Visitor Center.

Sincerely,

J Randy Forbes

Mike McIntyre

Ken Cuccinelli

John Carter TX-31

Virgil Goode

Mac Thornberry

Jay Pitts Pa-14

JM Walsh FL-01

Joe Wilson, SC-02

Long Lamborn CO-5

Paul Ryan

Steve King

Whipham TN-1

Tim Walberg MI-07

John Klein MN-2

~~ACLU TX-2~~

K-201 TX-11

Mark Amodeo OH-3

Alison Lundergan Grimes MO-02

Robin Hayes NC-8

Caution Hudger
WAGS

Bill Sali ID-1

Paul Lambert

Walter B. Jones

Bill Brown Tx 26

Doug Walden

Pat J. T. L.

T. McCarty (MI-11)

Jeff I-19

J. Stewart White

Up Paul

Shirley Jones

Bob J. Wittman

Dana Robinson

Ellen Smith

Louise Price

Jerry Moran

John Emery

Paul Ryan

Melvin Drake

Clarence Hunt

James Baker

Tommy Don KY-4

Henry Allen

Mr. Madigan

Greg Follmer with CA-19

Art Jones

Federal Madigan NC-10

Richard Bachman of Mich St H-24

Paul Brown

Ralph W. Hall

Moselem

Lin Carter

Tom Fessing
Pete Hochstetler

Vern Zubarna H-13

Ronald H. Meng also (H-16)

Virginia Foxe

W. Todd Cline

Frank Franks

Pat Fessing H-32

Leo Hans H-05

Phil Bongey Ga-11

Mary Fulton OK-5

Jean Edmundt Ok-2

Marilyn Musgrave Co-04

John Culberson TEXAS 7

Bel Gollatte

Sandy Johnson

Robert B. Alarcon

Sue Myrick

Bob Boly

Frank R. Boy

Frank E. Brown

Marshall Blackburn

Jim Jordan

~~Bob~~

AT Ty

John Brown

John T. Dabille

John Dabille

Bob Davis

Ray Hunt

Mark Souder

John Davis

Mike Ferguson

Cliff

Bill Shuster

John Sull

1992 Tucker

Mike Rogers (AL)

PP Delis

Tommy Page (MI)

Joe Barton

Lamar Smith

W. B. Burdette

W. B. Burdette

Rodney Alexander

Phil English

Adrian Smith

John Barber

Tom Davis

Dan Burton

J. McLaughlin

Dave Walden

Gen. A. B. Baker - FL-9

Signatures for CVC letter
(108)

Rep. J. Randy Forbes
Rep. Mike McIntyre
Rep. Randy Neugebauer
Rep. John Carter
Rep. Virgil Goode
Rep. Mac Thornberry
Rep. Joseph Pitts
Rep. Jeff Miller
Rep. Joe Wilson
Rep. Doug Lamborn
Rep. J. Gresham Barrett
Rep. Steve King
Rep. David Davis
Rep. Tim Walberg
Rep. John Kline
Rep. Ted Poe
Rep. Mike Conaway
Rep. Michael R. Turner
Rep. Stevan Pearce
Rep. Robin Hayes
Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Rep. Bill Sali
Rep. Louie Gohmert
Rep. Walter B. Jones
Rep. Michael C. Burgess
Rep. Jerry Moran
Rep. Greg Walden
Rep. Jo Ann Emerson
Rep. Patrick Tiberi
Rep. Paul Ryan
Rep. Thaddeus McCotter
Rep. Thelma Drake
Rep. John Shimkus
Rep. Duncan Hunter
Rep. J. Howard Coble
Rep. Spencer Bachus
Rep. Chip Pickering
Rep. Geoff Davis
Rep. Mike Pence
Rep. Henry Cuellar
Rep. Robert Wittman
Rep. John Shadegg
Rep. Dana Rohrabacher
Rep. George Radanovich

Rep. Chris Smith
Rep. Cliff Stearns
Rep. Thomas Price
Rep. Patrick McHenry
Rep. Michele Bachmann
Rep. Kenny Marchant
Rep. Paul C. Broun
Rep. Ralph M. Hall
Rep. Peter Roskam
Rep. Eric Cantor
Rep. Tom Feeney
Rep. Vern Buchanan
Rep. Pete Hoekstra
Rep. Donald A. Manzullo
Rep. Virginia Foxx
Rep. W. Todd Akin
Rep. Trent Franks
Rep. Pete Sessions
Rep. Scott Garrett
Rep. Phil Gingrey
Rep. Mary Fallin
Rep. Jean Schmidt
Rep. Marilyn Musgrave
Rep. John Culberson
Rep. Bob Goodlatte
Rep. Sam Johnson
Rep. Robert B. Aderholt
Rep. Sue Myrick
Rep. Rob Bishop
Rep. Mark Souder
Rep. Frank R. Wolf
Rep. Lincoln Davis
Rep. Henry E. Brown
Rep. Mike Ferguson
Rep. Marsha Blackburn
Rep. Adam Putnam
Rep. Jim Jordan
Rep. Bill Shuster
Rep. Roscoe Bartlett
Rep. John Sullivan
Rep. Rick Renzi
Rep. Gary Miller
Rep. John Boozman
Rep. Todd Tiahrt

Rep. John T. Doolittle
Rep. Mike Rogers (AL)
Rep. Jim Saxton
Rep. Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Rep. Bob Inglis
Rep. Mike Rogers (MI)
Rep. Roy Blunt
Rep. Joe Barton
Rep. Lamar Smith
Rep. John Boehner
Rep. Jeb Hensarling
Rep. Tom Davis
Rep. Charles W. Boustany
Rep. Dan Burton
Rep. Rodney Alexander
Rep. Jim McCrery
Rep. Phil English
Rep. Dave Weldon
Rep. Adrian Smith
Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis