



WRAP-UP

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Capitol Architectural Quirks, Often Unnoticed, Add to Statehouse's Charm

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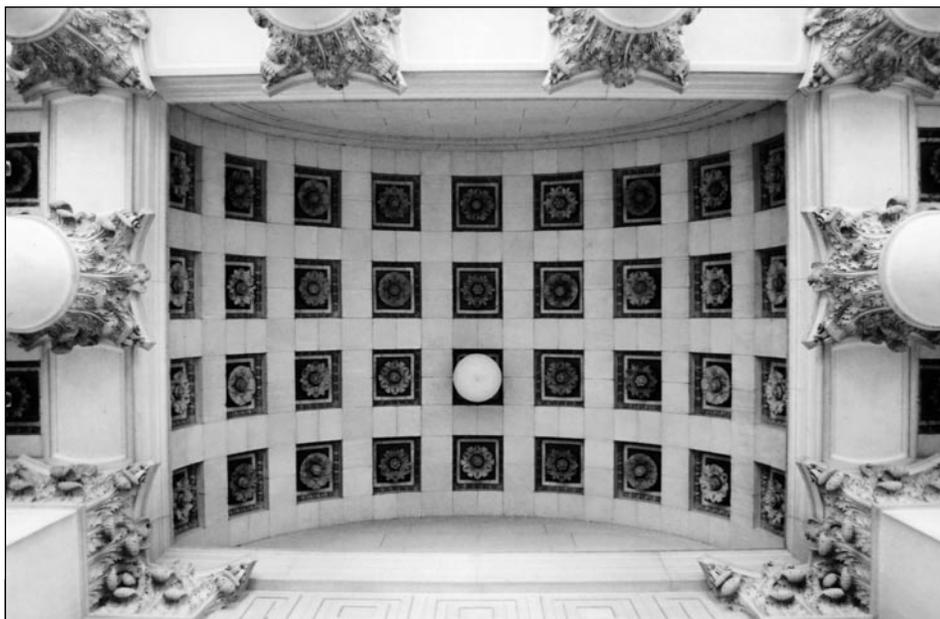
Beneath the rosettes that adorn the ceilings that lead to the House and Senate chambers, lawmakers, visitors and employees move and hustle through the maze of people that line the 535,000 square feet of halls and floors. The walls stand still, made from the finest marble, and those who walk by barely notice the tiny details translated from architectural design into art. Amidst the blue and red panels of color that contrast from the Rotunda's center, all find themselves concerned with the legislative process, while the visible architecture and hidden details of the building are lost in the background to the business of the day.

The Capitol, in fact, contains just as many intricacies as a piece of legislation, but instead of being written on paper, these complexities are etched in stone and carved in wood.

It is in this historic building, designated in 1994 as one of the greatest state capitol buildings in the United States by the Building Owners and Managers Association International, that workers and legislators – busy with the day's work – often overlook the complexities and quirks of the building in which West Virginia's Legislature is housed. In fact, there are many sights and details that when noticed or revealed, are followed by an, "I've worked here all these years, and I never knew that."

For instance, construction on the State Capitol began in 1924 and was completed in 1932, taking eight years to construct Cass Gilbert's design, full of marble columns, rich paints and ceiling rosettes. The West Wing, which houses the Senate, was completed after one year of construction that began in 1924 and ended in 1925. The East Wing was the next section of the Capitol to be constructed, beginning in 1926 and ending in 1927. Capping off the Capitol's completion was the installment of the Capitol's center – the Rotunda – which was built from 1930-1932.

The final price of building the complex was \$9.5 million, a price paid in full upon completion. If West Virginia were to rebuild the Statehouse in its entirety, exactly as it stands now, it would come at a price that is unaffordable – as one Cultural Center worker stated, the Capitol is literally "priceless."



Ceiling Rosettes - Front Portico

Once atop the spacious stairways at either the North or South exterior of the Capitol, one can look directly above to observe examples of the ceiling rosettes. The colonnade of these porticos is styled in the classic Roman Corinthian order, and supports a vaulted ceiling that features square coffered panels containing these rosettes, which represent West Virginia hardwoods.

photo: Martin Valent

As she noted, the price of a marble coffee tabletop can run from \$200-\$1,000. But marble pillars are different than coffee tabletops, especially when they are weighed in tons instead of pounds. Two-hundred train carloads of marble were needed to construct the interior of the Capitol building. Moreover, the two support columns in front of both the House and Senate weigh 34 tons. Ultimately, two-thirds of the Capitol's interior is composed of seven different types of marble – literally priceless. The Statehouse is insured for \$200 million.

However, before these details can be noticed and the architecture can be appreciated, lighting is needed. Lining the halls that lead to both the House of Delegates and the Senate are 55 column lights, representing each of West Virginia's 55 counties. These black and gold Belgian marble columns are capped off by translucent alabaster sconces – emanating a soft and golden glow.

Lighting is an important and expensive feature for both houses and the Rotunda area, as well. Although the ceilings in the House and Senate may differ in style and structure, the chandeliers that dangle from the center of the room are equal in grandiose proportion and price. Together, both chandeliers are worth \$500,000.

The chandelier in the center of the Rotunda, though, is on a much more grand scale than those lights that hang in both houses. The central light measures in at eight feet in diameter and weighs 4,000 pounds. It takes 96 light bulbs to illuminate the 10,080 Czech Republic Crystals that make up the chandelier. Every four years, the chandelier is lowered for cleaning; then the panels of crystal are removed and dipped into a warm rinse.

The dome that encases the Rotunda is just as noteworthy. The recently remodeled, gray and gold-leafed dome is the fourth largest dome in the United States. And, although the dome



In the House

As of 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 15, the 36th day of the 2006 Regular Session 1226 bills have been introduced in the House of Delegates. Of those, 62 have been passed by the House and sent to the Senate for its consideration. Some of the bills that passed the House this week and have been sent to the Senate are:

House Bill 2141 would require non-profit organizations to obtain a permit from a county commission to solicit monies from cars on public highways. One of the requirements to receive the permit would be that the organization certify that only persons over the age of 18 would participate in the solicitation.

House Bill 2312 would require all hotels and motels with rooms that are designated as handicapped accessible to install, at a minimum, grab bars in all showers and tubs. The grab bars would have to meet the specifications detailed in the American Disabilities Act of 1990.

House Bill 2947 would specify the forms of payments that can be made for delinquent property taxes on property that will be sold by the county sheriff. The bill would require the delinquent payment made within 14 days of the scheduled sale

of the property be made only by cashiers check, money order, certified check or United States currency.

House Bill 4004 would prohibit law enforcement officials from using traffic cameras to detect or convict individuals of traffic violations.

House Bill 4041 would provide for a limited amount of liability immunity for volunteers of a public health department. The immunity would apply to simple negligence arising from the volunteer's acts or omissions during the course of their service. The immunity would not apply to acts of intentional torture or gross negligence.

House Bill 4065 would expand the crimes for which parole hearings notification forms must be completed. The bill would add the following crimes to the list that requires notification of parole hearings: bank robbery, voluntary manslaughter, negligent homicide, driving under the influence causing death, fleeing causing death, malicious wounding, malicious assault, child abuse resulting in death, child neglect resulting in death.

House Bill 4072 would make it a misdemeanor offense for a person to remove a dog's tags if they are not the owner of the dog. The penalties for conviction of this misdemeanor would be public service for 5-15 days and/or a fine of \$50 - \$100.

House Bill 4107 would increase the penalties for a care giver who abuses or neglects an elderly or incapacitated person who is under their care. This bill would change conviction of this offence from a misdemeanor to a felony and require that the incarceration time be served at a state correction facility instead of a county jail, and would increase the fines and jail time.

House Bill 4129 would require telephone solicitors who call on behalf of charitable organizations to tell the person called, if they ask, how much of the donated money the solicitor will keep and how much will actually go to the charitable organization.

House Bill 4240 would change the name of the Community and Technical College of Shepherd to the Blue Ridge Community and Technical College.

House Bill 4260 would enhance the objectives of audits performed by the State Board conducted on educational facilities' performance. The bill also would require the State Board to report their findings to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability no later than December 1, 2006.

Bills Passed Both Chambers (week of February 9-15)

Senate Bill 539 will remove the qualification of five years of underground coal mining experience for applicants applying for the position of the Director of the Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training, making this requirement optional if the applicant had completed five years of education and training in underground coal mining safety.

House Bill 4037 will amend the definition of real property previously specified in §11-4-3 of the West Virginia Code, to specify a place of residence to not be just the primary place of residence. The amendment is retroactive to July 1, 2005.

House Bill 4295 would establish a bird dog training permit. The fee for this permit would be \$10.

House Bill 4306 would prohibit individuals from demonstrating within 500 feet of a funeral service or procession. The bill would make individuals encroaching upon the procession closer than 500 feet after previously being warned by law-enforcement officials face felony charges. Penalties of this offense would result in incarceration for one to five years, or a fine of \$500-\$2000, upon conviction.

House Bill 4307 would allow drivers of antique cars and motorcycles an extended time period on weekends to drive their vehicles for recreational purposes. Currently the time period is Saturday through Sunday evening. This bill would extend the time to begin at 4:00 p.m. on Friday.

House Bill 4309 would detail the type of information to be placed on a racial profiling form that West Virginia law enforcement officials must complete after a traffic stop, as part of a statewide study on racial profiling. The bill would require the Director of the Governor's Committee on Crime, Delinquency and Correction to publish the findings of this study and analysis of the information by February 1, 2009, and provide copies of this publication to the Governor and to the Joint Committee on Government and Finance.

House Bill 4447 would allow county Boards of Education to lease school buses to non-profit organizations for the use of transportation to and from fairs, festivals and other educational and cultural events. The driver would be required, by this law, to be regularly employed by the county Board of Education.

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In the Senate

As of 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 14, on the 36th day of the 2006 Regular Session, 586 bills have been introduced in the Senate. Thirty-seven bills have been passed by the Senate and sent to the House for further consideration. The following six bills were passed by the Senate since Thursday, February 9:

Senate Bill 270 would continue Board of Banking and Financial Institutions and regulate the qualifications for members chosen to represent the public on the board. After July 1, 2006, when a vacancy occurs among the executive officers of state banking institutions, the commissioner would divide all of the state banking institutions, according to asset size, into three equal groups. The replacement would be selected from the appropriate group to ensure that each group has a representative on the board. One member would be an executive officer of a financial institution other than a banking institution, while the other two members would represent the public; neither of whom would be an employee, officer, trustee, director or stockholder owner of five percent or more of the outstanding shares of any financial institution.

Senate Bill 462 would require the filing of all interstate compacts and information relating to compacts with the Secretary of State's Office. The proposed law would grant 90 days for a commission, an agency, or a person administering the compact to properly file with the Secretary of State.

Senate Bill 473 would create a new offense of reckless driving when the incident causes serious bodily injury. Serious bodily injury would encompass all bodily injury that creates a high risk of death, causes serious or permanent disfigurement, or causes the loss or functional impairment of any bodily member or organ.

Senate Bill 505 would extend time for the Fairmont City Council to present to voters of the city an election for a municipal excess levy that would provide funding for the operation, maintenance and repair of the streets and roadways in the city between March 27 -28 and the third Tuesday in April until May 19, 2006.

Senate Bill 556 would amend a current law that relates to state parks and operational contracts for recreation systems. The amendment would require legislative notice and legislative approval of a proposed contract location between the director of a state park or recreational system and the contractor.

Senate Bill 557 would remove the requirement for the construction of the Shady Spring Turnpike Interchange and restore tolls to their prior rates.

A Sampling of Bills Introduced In the Senate

Senate Bill 540 would make it a felony offense to solicit another person, or group of persons to commit a violent crime. A person found guilty of this crime would face 3-15 years in prison if the violent offense solicited is punishable to life imprisonment. If the violent offense solicited is punishable by a term that is less than life imprisonment, the person found guilty of soliciting the violent crime would face between one and three years in prison and/or fined no more than \$5,000.

Senate Bill 543 would create the "Asbestos and Silica Compensation Fairness Act." The aim of this bill is to create guidelines for asbestos and silica claims, to provide for the fair and efficient judicial consideration of personal injury and wrongful death claims from asbestos or silica exposure, and to ensure that individuals who suffer from illnesses caused by exposure to asbestos or silica receive just compensation.

Senate Bill 547 relates to acceptable state Internet use policies. The proposed bill would require the Secretary of the Department of Administration to propose a rule implementing acceptable use standards for the Internet by public employees. The bill would prohibit public employees from doing the following while using state owned computers and communication devices: sending, viewing, or downloading explicit material and participating in private business purposes, political purposes of a partisan nature, campaign purposes or services for personal gain

Senate Bill 550 relates to landline telephone service contracts. Currently in the State of West Virginia, landline telephone companies use automatic contract renewals for their consumers. This proposed legislation would provide standards for landline telephone contracts that would require telephone companies to issue new contracts to customers upon expiration of the initial term of the contract, or allow the current contract to renew on a month-to-month basis. The legislation also would provide that contracts that have been renewed automatically could be terminated without incurring fees or fines for ending the contract.

Senate Bill 561 would create a misdemeanor offense for the interference of the medical treatment of an injured railroad worker. A railroad company convicted of this misdemeanor would be fined no more than \$10,000 for each violation. A person convicted of this misdemeanor would be fined no more than \$10,000 for each violation and/or confined to jail for no more than one year.

Senate Bill 564 would create the Berkeley County Litter Control pilot project. The project would be a volunteer-based program ran by the Berkeley County Commission that would coordinate all industry and business organizations seeking to aid in litter control and recycling.

Senate Bill 565 would authorize educational benefits for the spouses of certain deceased persons who were killed during military service. Tuition fees would not be charged to eligible applicants attending any state education or training institution. The Spouse Educational Opportunities Benefit Account would be funded by appropriations made by the State Legislature, income from the investment of moneys held in the special revenue account and all other sums available for deposit to the special revenue account from any public or private source.

Senate Bill 567 would create the Energy Policy and Development Act. This Act would establish the Division of Energy and the position of the Executive Director, who would coordinate governmental activities intended to develop an energy policy and a development plan that would include innovative alternative and traditional sources of energy.

Senate Bill 571 relates to the pay of National Guard members. The bill would set the salary of the Adjutant General at the pay and allowance of an officer of the same rank on active duty. The bill also would set a minimum base pay for members of the National Guard and provide tuition payment for the cost of post-graduate courses of members.

West Virginia Legislature's Web site

Designed to strengthen your connection to West Virginia's legislators and the laws that govern this state, the West Virginia Legislature's Web site provides you with access to various resources, including contact information, legislation and educational materials. The Legislature's online Bulletin Board maintains prompt information during legislative sessions through the Legislature's Calendars, Meetings, Abstracts, Indexes and Journals. Citizens also can view the entire West Virginia Code, interactive district maps, committee agendas and membership information at: <http://www.legis.state.wv.us>

is smaller in diameter than the U.S. Capitol, West Virginian's Capitol dome in Charleston is 4 1/2 feet taller than the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

In his design, Gilbert not only decorated and embellished the walls, floors and Rotunda areas of the Capitol, but he also made sure that the ceilings that lead to the both House chambers were equally as extravagant. Visitors see plaster molded rosettes that appear to be blossoming from the ceiling. These medallions, though, are more than a decoration for the ceiling; they are a reflection of the state's environment. Carved from plaster, the rosettes are sculpted to resemble the leaves of three prominent pieces of foliage: Sugar Maple (the state tree), Magnolia and Red Oak.

Unlike the sights that can readily be viewed and aesthetically appreciated, behind the Capitol's walls lie items – treasure chests of yesteryears. In the well of the Rotunda, marked with a bronze plaque, is a time capsule that was sealed away during the Rockefeller administration in 1982. Pop culture meets politics as the contents of the capsule showcase political speeches and

80s memorabilia. Among the contents of the chest are a copy of Governor Rockefeller's 1982 State of the State Address, a road map, a congratulatory message from Cass Gilbert's grandchildren, a Rubik's Cube and a 45-rpm record of "Roseanna" by Toto (the number one album from the Top 40). In 2032, marking the 50th year that the capsule has been locked away, the past will be opened and seen by those in the present.

The Capitol is a complex building, all of its 333 rooms. In "Trivial Pursuit" fashion, every aspect of its architecture could be the answer to a West Virginia history question. For example, Anna Jarvis' bust is the only statue of a female on the Statehouse grounds. Moreover, two U.S. Presidents are honored within the Capitol Grounds: Abraham Lincoln is featured in a statue that faces the Kanawha River, and a plaque in the stairwell that leads to the Capitol basement features an excerpt from John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address.

Another fact: Before 1995, when the House Chamber was remodeled, three electrical outlets were all that were provided for the state's 100 delegates. After the remodeling was complete, each Delegate was allotted

two outlets – one for a computer and one for a lamp. The elevators in the center part of the building are numbered in European fashion beginning with Basement, Ground (as compared to first), First (often thought of as second), and Second (which is more like the third). Some of the Capitol's greatest charm exudes from its little quirks – either etched in stone or painted on an edifice. This isn't always noticed.

Despite the detailed halls and ceilings, floors and doorways of the West Virginia Capitol, Gilbert's overall scheme will forever be incomplete – on the brink of being fully realized. He designed the U. S. Supreme Court building and U.S. Chamber of Commerce, but the West Virginia Capitol is not completely finished. In the Rotunda's center, blue panels that were originally intended to feature murals of the Mountain State encircle the upper well. Before his vision was fully realized, Gilbert passed away. The panels will remain empty and blue, honoring Gilbert's design and the murals he envisioned when he first drew the blueprints in 1924. Even without them, the building, itself, is full of just as much history as it has marble – a priceless Statehouse.

The West Virginia Legislature's Office of Reference & Information

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