



## Capitol Art meeting focuses on what to show at Capitol Public survey available

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By FRITZ BUSCH - Staff Writer , The Journal

MANKATO - About 60 people discussed State Capitol Art and how to deal with it in varying tones and opinions in Ostrander Auditorium at Minnesota State University (MSU), Mankato Monday.

When the State Capitol reopens in 2017, there will be increased public space that may be available to accommodate new art. The restoration process includes an opportunity to review and discuss existing Capitol Art that some feel is insensitive and not representative of Minnesota today.

Capitol Art Subcommittee members at the meeting included retired Minnesota Supreme Court Judge Hon. Paul Anderson; Sen. David Senjem, R-Rochester; and MSU English Prof. Gwen Westerman.

Senjem said Capitol public space will double when the restoration project is done.

"Some people feel some Capitol art is insensitive and doesn't represent Native Americans respectfully," Senjem said. "After public input is taken, the subcommittee will help decide what to do with Capitol art."

Meeting attendees broke into two discussion groups and mulled new art, and how to deal with current art, including moving or removing pieces.

In 1910, when many of the Capitol artwork was added, there were several thousand Native Americans in Minnesota and there were very few other non-whites in the state. By 2030, a much larger percentage of the state population and the fastest growing groups will be Asians, Blacks, Latinos and people of two or more races, Senjem said.

"Those groups should be represented in Capitol art as well," Westerman said. She talked about a Traverse des Sioux Treaty signing painting at the Capitol. "It was described by the Dakota words for peace and friendship and how 'we'll hold each other forever in our hearts,'" Westerman said.

Group discussion included the need to create art that could be enjoyed by the visually-impaired, that art should be done by Minnesota artists and that art should include negative things that happen.

George Glotzbach of New Ulm described the Brown County Historical Society (BCHS) 1862 Uprising exhibit includes photos and stories that can serve as teaching moments for the likes of Gen. Sibley, Chief Little Crow and New Ulm artist Anton Gag.

Glotzbach said he vehemently opposed the removal of Capitol art. "I see that as censorship, against the Constitution," Glotzbach said. "Interpret it if you like, but Capitol art should stay there."

MSU Indigenous Studies and Anthropology Prof. Chelsea Mead said several Capitol paintings including some in prominent areas depicted Whites as racially superior to Native Americans. "Those paintings should be removed and replaced," Mead said. "I was horrified by that art in the Senate Chamber. It doesn't depict democracy. (Chief Little Crow's bones were in the Capitol until the 1970s."

"That's censorship. You can't change what happened," Glotzbach said.

Senjem talked about the value of existing Capitol art. "One appraiser estimated 17 pieces including a rotunda mural worth about \$950 million," Senjem said. "The Capitol must be a place where all feel welcome. There won't be a perfect solution for all."

An Art in the Minnesota State Capitol Survey is available at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/capitol-art](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/capitol-art)

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