

DATE: March 27, 2015

TO: Capitol Preservation Commission

FROM: Justice Paul Anderson, Senator David Senjem, Representative Diane Loeffler  
Co-Chairs, Capitol Preservation Commission Subcommittee on Art

RE: Report and Request for Appropriation

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## 1. Request for Action

The Arts Subcommittee unanimously passed the following at its meeting on March 23, 2015:

**It is recommended that the Capitol Preservation Commission seek \$3.25 million for art restoration in the Capitol.**

## 2. Key Findings

- Some of the murals and other artwork of the Capitol have visible bubbling and other characteristics that indicate it is separating from the plaster or deteriorating in other ways. Because of the inaccessibility of much of the art, it will not be possible to be fully assessed as to condition without scaffolding and close inspection.
- One of the rotunda lunettes actually fell and ripped during restoration work in the dome area.
- Funding for art restoration and conservation was not included in the funding for the physical restoration of the Capitol and the extent of the damage and need was unknown at the time.
- Rental and installation of the tall scaffolding needed for assessment and restoration work is very expensive. Doing this work during the physical restoration of the Capitol will save significant funds. Therefore it is recommended that the funding request be declared urgent and the appropriation be sought during the current session of the Legislature.
- Coordinated restoration and conservation work during the closure of major portions of the Capitol will also avoid another extended period of major closures with disruption to the public and governance.
- The specialized talent needed for conservation work is limited and action now will strengthen the ability of the state to retain those skills at times that are maximally coordinated with the current scaffold and work schedules.
- The extensive amount of art in the Capitol has not been formally assessed but the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board has made available funds from the sale of Sesquicentennial license plates for that work. That work is now being contracted and will take advantage of restoration scaffolding as it is installed.
- The restoration appropriation recommendation is based on past assessments of a small portion of the art, current knowledge of some likely costs, and professional judgement.
- The recommendation is based on a priority for restoring works that are inaccessible without scaffolding and work that would be disruptive to the business conducted in the Capitol.

The Arts Subcommittee also wanted the Commission to know that they are looking forward to addressing the other responsibilities they have been given and anticipate that further funding requests will emerge as the possibilities for displaying new art are further explored. We are honored to be working with a very talented and dedicated group of appointees and look forward to providing thoughtful recommendations as we continue our work.

## Additional Background Provided by the Minnesota Historical Society

As the Governor and Legislature continue work on assembling the state's budget, there is an urgent need to secure funding for preservation of important art work in the historic Minnesota State Capitol. These works are an integral part of architect Cass Gilbert's vision for the building and it is essential that they be conserved while the rest of this building is renovated. Upon completion of the Capitol project, the public will expect these magnificent and highly visible works of art to be part of the newly restored Capitol. This body of work includes painted murals in highly visible locations in the Capitol including inside the Rotunda and Dome, above the East and West grand staircases and art work within Supreme Court and legislative chambers, as well as numerous others.

Taking care of this art work is a two-step process. First, in the assessment phase, a qualified conservation professional determines the conservation needs of each work and prepares a work-plan and estimated cost. The assessment process involves close examination and materials testing to determine the repair and preservation needs for each work. The actual conservation work could involve simply cleaning or could involve more complicated repairs to the work itself or to the underlying surfaces followed by repairing the art. Second, once the scope of work is determined, the actual conservation work to restore the art takes place.

This assessment process is challenging because of the difficulty of reaching and accessing works in places such as the Rotunda or above staircases like those adjacent to the Supreme Court or Senate Chamber. For this reason, it is essential that both the assessment and conservation phases are done while scaffolding is in place to minimize the expense. We also face a challenge at this time in estimating costs to secure funding while not having the benefit of a close examination of the art work.

The design and construction management team is currently working with Page Conservation, Inc. and Conrad Schmitt, Inc on the assessment phase, which is expected to be completed over the course of the next several weeks and months as scaffolding is installed in various areas of the Capitol and conservation professionals gain access to the works of art.

At this time, conservation of Capitol art work is not included in the Capitol Preservation project budget. We need to ensure that funding is in place to complete this work along with the larger project, although a precise estimate of costs to conserve the art works will not be possible until all the works can be assessed.

A preliminary estimate for conservation of Capitol art work would be approximately \$3.25 million, based on past estimates for specific groups of more accessible art work in the Capitol. This funding includes contractor costs and potential equipment costs.