



U.S. CAPITOL *Visitor Center*

Exhibition Hall General Description

Dedicated to the citizens of the United States, the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center offers visitors an enhanced educational experience as they tour the historic U.S. Capitol building and explore the legislative branch of government.

Located on the lower level of the Capitol Visitor Center, the 16,500 square foot Exhibition Hall is the only exhibition in the world dedicated to telling the story of the United States Congress and the U.S. Capitol. The Exhibition Hall features original documents and artifacts, videos, computer interactives and two theaters, providing visitors with an in-depth look at how Congress works as well as information on their own Representatives and Senators.



Visitors study a scale model of the Capitol campus in the Capitol Visitor Center's 16,500-square-foot Exhibition Hall.

Just inside the Exhibition Hall entrance stands an 11-foot-tall touchable model of the Capitol Dome whose interior contains a scale model of the Rotunda in all its architectural and artistic glory. The dome model provides visitors with an intimate look at this iconic symbol of representative democracy. The polyurethane model is tough, durable, easily cleaned, and it never needs to be painted since color is impregnated into the mold. The front of the model shows the exterior of the dome from its base to the Statue of Freedom. The back side of the model depicts a cutaway showing the construction of the inner and outer cast iron dome and the interior of the Rotunda, from the fresco depicting George Washington to the sandstone blocks of the Rotunda floor. The lighting on the dome simulates a day/night cycle, showing how the light in the tholos (the ring of columns below the Statue of Freedom) comes on when Congress is in session. Visitors can peek through the windows on the front of the model and see inside to the artistic treasures in the Rotunda, including paintings and bas-reliefs that were carefully color-matched to the actual paintings on the east side of the Rotunda. Even the fresco masterpiece in the Rotunda ceiling, the "Apotheosis of Washington" by Constantino Brumidi, was carefully replicated using a combination of photographs and hand painting.

Also in the Exhibition Hall, a virtual tour of the Capitol provides unique views into many beautiful and historic rooms, some of which are usually off-limits to the public. Six history alcoves housing artifacts, documents, images and videos bring to life the fascinating story of the House of Representatives and the Senate. In each alcove, highly detailed architectural models trace the evolution of the Capitol Campus from a rural landscape to a small "city within a city" and the home of the world's most recognizable symbol of democracy.

The Hall's most dominant features are two 93-foot-long curving marble walls which house original historic documents that highlight the efforts of Congress to move the nation "toward a more perfect Union." Among the treasures included in the wall are President Thomas Jefferson's confidential letter to Congress asking Members to fund the Lewis and Clark expedition, President John F. Kennedy's speech to Congress vowing to put a man on the moon in 10 years, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" speech to Congress, the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote, the Medicare Act in 1965, and many other precious documents.

At one of two small theaters, visitors can watch short films that explore the unique histories and cultures of the House and the Senate which are complemented by live television feeds from each chamber when Congress is in session.

For more information about the Capitol Visitor Center, go to www.visitthecapitol.gov. January 2009