

Report of the Capitol Preservation Committee to the 2025 Kansas Legislature

CHAIRPERSON: Patrick Zollner

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS: Senators Chase Blasi and Elaine Bowers; and Representatives Jesse Borjon and Valdenia Winn

NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS: Joseph Brentano, Frank Burnam, Anthony Hensley, Will Lawrence, Carrie Rahfaldt, Cory Sheedy, and Curtis Young

CHARGE

Review Various Issues Regarding the Capitol

Pursuant to KSA 75-2269, the responsibilities of the Committee are:

- Approving all proposals for renovation of all areas of the Capitol, the Capitol's Visitor Center, and the grounds surrounding the Capitol to ensure that the historical beauty of the areas are preserved;
- Preserving the proper decor of such areas;
- Assuring that any art or artistic displays are historically accurate and have historic significance;
- Overseeing the location and types of temporary and revolving displays of the Capitol, including the Visitor Center; and
- Overseeing the reconfiguration or redecoration of committee rooms within the Statehouse.

January 2025

Capitol Preservation Committee

ANNUAL REPORT

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Committee makes the following recommendations:

- Continue conversation about moving the placement of the mural in the Lieutenant Governor's office to a more public space that would allow the mural to be viewed by more visitors; and
- Continue conversation about adding artwork to legislative committee rooms through a subcommittee process.

Proposed Legislation: None.

BACKGROUND

The Capitol Preservation Committee was created by the Legislature in 2010 to approve renovation proposals in all areas of the Capitol, Capitol Visitor Center, and Capitol grounds to ensure the historical beauty of these areas is preserved, preserve the proper decor of these areas, assure any art or artistic displays are historically accurate and have historic significance, approve the location and types of temporary displays, and oversee the reconfiguration of committee rooms within the Capitol.

As provided by KSA 75-2269, the Division of Legislative Administrative Services is responsible for implementing the recommendations of the Committee.

The Committee is composed of 12 members, with the Governor appointing 3, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House each appointing 2, and the Minority Leaders of the Senate and House each appointing 1.

The Committee's three ex officio members are the Statehouse Architect, Director of the Kansas Arts Commission, and Executive Director of the Kansas State Historical Society.

The Governor has the authority to appoint the chairperson from the Committee's membership. Currently, the chairperson is the Executive Director of the Kansas State Historical Society.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Committee met on April 4 and December 19, 2024. In addition, subcommittees on various topics met on February 20 and December 30, 2024, and on January 10, 2025. All meetings occurred at the Capitol.

April 4, 2024, Meeting

During the meeting, the Committee reviewed legislation regarding a proposed new memorial in the Capitol for Father Kapaun, received the report from the Subcommittee on Signage, and gave final approval for the Suffragist Memorial Mural.

Legislation for Father Kapaun Memorial

Senator Blasi discussed 2024 SB 431, which was passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor on March 22, 2024. The bill directs the Committee to approve plans for a memorial honoring Father Emil Joseph Kapaun, who served as an Army chaplain during the

Korean War, where he was a prisoner of war; he died during his detention.

Subcommittee on Signage

Senator Bowers reported on the recommendation of the Subcommittee, which met on February 20, 2024. The Subcommittee recommended placing small signs next to each of the “Four Kansans” statues in the Second Floor Rotunda that identify the statues’ artist, Peter Felten, Jr., who is a native and resident of Hays. Representative Wasinger and a City of Hays representative stated the Hays Chamber of Commerce would pay for the signs, and the signs would match the existing signs that identify the person depicted in each statue. The Committee approved the Subcommittee’s recommendation. [Note: The signs have been installed.]

Final Approval of Suffragist Memorial Mural

The Committee reviewed the updated proposal for the Suffragist Memorial Mural that included changes suggested by the Committee at the October 2023 meeting. After discussion, the Committee voted to approve the proposed mural and an accompanying informational plaque for installation in the Capitol.

[Note: The mural will be installed on the north wall facing the Cage Elevator on the first floor of the Capitol. The mural will be unveiled at a celebration on Kansas Day, January 29, 2025.]

December 19, 2024, Meeting

The Committee received updates regarding projects in the Capitol and on Capitol grounds, the Fallen Workers Memorial, created a subcommittee, gave tentative approval for the memorial honoring Father Kapaun, approved a new display for the Visitor Center, and discussed work toward the 1st Kansas (Colored) Voluntary Infantry Regiment Mural.

Capitol and Capitol Grounds Updates

The Deputy Secretary of Operations and Director of Facilities and Property Management for the Department of Administration reviewed current projects in the Capitol and on Capitol grounds. The Deputy Secretary noted that the Ad Astra Plaza project was completed during the fall of 2024.

Fallen Workers Memorial

The Chairperson provided information regarding a memorial to the fallen workers of the Capitol who died during construction work on the Capitol through the years. [Note: The memorial was proposed at the Committee’s October 2023 meeting.] The Committee approved the installation of a panel that lists the workers by name and when they died. The panel will be located in the main hallway of the Visitor Center above the exhibit of tools used during construction of the Capitol.

Father Kapaun Memorial

A member of the Chaplain Father Kapaun Memorial Committee (Memorial Committee) provided an overview of Father Kapaun’s life and service. The Memorial Committee selected a bronze statue of Father Kapaun, which will be mounted on top of a bronze base, with panels on three sides depicting Father Kapaun’s life and service.

The Committee approved the creation of a subcommittee to review the forthcoming details of the statue and also approved the Memorial Committee proceeding with its plans for the statue, with the understanding the subcommittee will make a recommendation to the Committee regarding the proposal.

New Display for the Visitor Center

A long-time legislative lobbyist and political paraphernalia collector presented a proposal to display campaign and political buttons and other memorabilia in an exhibit that would be located in a recessed wall next to the Cafeteria in the Visitor Center. The goal would be to educate visitors about how a person must run for office to serve Kansans as an elected official. The Committee approved the design and installation of the display contingent on consultation with the Chairperson and staff of the Kansas State Historical Society.

Subcommittee on the 1st Kansas (Colored) Voluntary Infantry Regiment Mural

Representative Winn announced an upcoming meeting of the Subcommittee on the 1st Kansas (Colored) Voluntary Infantry Regiment Mural that was authorized by 2023 SB 39.

[*Note:* The Subcommittee met on December 30, 2024, and January 10, 2025, and planned to continue to meet in coming months.]

Subcommittee on Legislative Committee Room Artwork

The Committee created a subcommittee to discuss and make recommendations on artwork for legislative committee rooms.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee made the following recommendations:

- Continue conversation about moving the placement of the mural in the Lieutenant Governor's office to a more public space that would allow the mural to be viewed by more visitors; and
- Continue conversation about adding artwork to legislative committee rooms through a subcommittee process.