

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

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October 2, 2008

J. Randy Forbes  
Member of Congress  
307 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Forbes:

Thank you for your letter expressing the interest of the Congressional Prayer Caucus in the Capitol Visitors Center (CVC). As you know, the CVC was conceived as an extension to the Capitol building, designed to provide additional space for the millions of visitors who visit our Capitol and who come to Washington to learn and develop an appreciation for the role of the legislative branch in their federal government. After September 11, 2001, plans for the CVC changed, including additional security measures necessary to adapt to the post-9/11 world. After nearly seven years, more than \$600 million dollars, and significant work and planning by Congressional leadership, the CVC is poised to open on December 2, 2008.

H.R. 5159 is a carefully crafted bipartisan, bicameral bill that identifies the CVC as a part of the Capitol and provides the basic authority for visitor functions, CVC management, security and oversight responsibilities. This bill passed the House by voice vote in March and a negotiated amendment cleared the Senate by unanimous consent last week. It is important the House adopt this resolution quickly – by the end of this week. Failure to do so would impede our constituents' access to their elected representatives, squander scarce financial resources, and create new vulnerabilities in the security of our Capitol campus.

In addition to your letter, we read with great interest Senator DeMint's statement for the record of September 27th. We appreciate his concerns, and those of the entire Prayer Caucus. Accordingly, we concur with our Senate colleagues who have committed in principle to engrave "In God We Trust" and "The Pledge of Allegiance" in stone at a prominent place in the CVC. We will also agree to have the words "Our Nation's Motto" removed from the Unity panel on the Wall of Aspirations in the Exhibition Hall, and will work to replace it with a new panel. We have learned that these good faith commitments will cost an additional \$150,000, according to estimates furnished by the Architect of the Capitol.

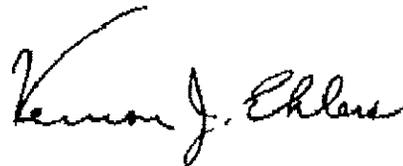
We also commit to direct the CVC staff to consult with the Prayer Caucus as well as the curators, Library of Congress and other experts in researching appropriate exhibits for the CVC that recognize the rich religious tradition of our Republic and its historic manifestation in the Capitol. In developing these exhibits, we will direct the CVC staff to consider the eight items outlined in your October 1 memo to House Administration Committee staff. Once CVC staff has completed their research and development of exhibit materials, we commit to doing our best, in cooperation with our counterparts in the Senate and other Members as necessary, to include the appropriate exhibit and exhibit materials in the CVC as soon as possible. We appreciate your efforts on behalf of concerned supporters of the Prayer Caucus and our commitment to address their concerns is strong.

We are pleased that you have agreed to support these measures and the swift passage of H.R. 5159.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Brady  
Chairman



Vernon J. Ehlers  
Ranking Republican Member