



# Arkansas State Capitol Self Guided Tour



Secretary of State  
John Thurston



# JOHN THURSTON

## ARKANSAS SECRETARY OF STATE

Welcome to the Arkansas State Capitol!

I take great pride in the history that embraces this building and find it an extraordinary privilege to be able to share it with you.

One of my most important duties as Secretary of State is maintaining and preserving the rich history of the Arkansas State Capitol.

Since 1911, this building has been the center of Arkansas's state government. In addition to being a beautiful historic landmark, the Capitol is both a handsome structure and a vital working building. It's the official home to six constitutional officers and over three hundred civil servants in the Legislative and Executive branches. It is my privilege to be one of them.



I hope you enjoy your time at the Arkansas State Capitol. Please feel free to stop by the Capitol Visitor Services Center with any additional questions or comments that you may have. You are always welcome to come back with your friends and family for another visit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Thurston".

John Thurston  
Arkansas Secretary of State

# General Tour Information

Welcome to the Arkansas State Capitol!

Please sign the guest register at the Capitol Visitor Services Center. We like to document how far everyone has traveled in coming to visit our beautiful building.

## Click and Share!

Feel free to take photos and capture memories while on your visit. We would love it if you shared images of our state capitol on your favorite social media site, but be sure to tell your friends and family to come visit us in person!

Remember to tag the Arkansas State Capitol in your post: #ARStateCapitol

## Hours & Accessibility

The Capitol Building is open from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday - Friday. There are two public passenger elevators, which are located in the east lobby, near the front entrance of the building.

## Tour Option

The Capitol Theater, located near the Visitor Services Center, features continuous informational videos about the construction history of the State Capitol and the notable people, places and events of Arkansas history.

We hope that you enjoy exploring the Arkansas Capitol with the aid of this self-guided tour booklet.

We also offer a self-guided tour of the Capitol's grounds that are noted for its seasonal landscaping, grand monuments and wide variety of native trees. It is available on our website at [www.sos.arkansas.gov/state-capitol/state-capitol-tour-information](http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/state-capitol/state-capitol-tour-information).





# Capitol Directory

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## First Floor (Map on page 4)

Visitor Services Center	Lower Rotunda
Exhibit Cases	North and South hallways
Great Seal Display	Lower Rotunda
State Capitol Police Desk	Elevator Lobby
State Land Commissioner	Room 109
Gift Shop	Lower Rotunda
Post Office	Lower Rotunda
Exhibit: Mentors and Models & Testament	North Entry
Restrooms	North and South Ends



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## Second Floor (Map on page 6)

Governor's Office	Room 250
Secretary of State's Office	Room 256
State Treasurer's Office	Room 220
State Auditor's Office	Room 230
Lieutenant Governor's Office	Room 270
Governor's Reception Room	North End
Rotunda and Bronze Doors	Center
Old Supreme Courtroom	South End



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## Third Floor (Map on page 11)

Senate Chamber	South End
House Chamber	North End
Heerwagen Murals	North and South Stairways
Exhibit: Building Forever	Northwest corner
Restrooms	South End



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## Fourth Floor (Map on page 15)

Senate Gallery	South End
House Gallery	North End
Exhibit: Arkansans at War	Northeast corner
Exhibit: Arkansans Through the Years, By the Numbers	Southeast corner
Exhibit: Arkansas State Symbols	Northwest & Southwest corners



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## Lower Level

Exhibit: State Capitol Construction images	Elevator lobby
Exhibit: Seasonal photos	East-central hallway
500 Grill	West-central hallway
Restrooms	North and South Ends





# Building the Arkansas State Capitol

Arkansas was still in its infancy as a state in 1842 when the first capitol building was completed. As the new government grew, the building we now know as the Old State House was no longer large enough, and it fell into disrepair. As chunks of plaster began raining down to the Senate floor, legislators debated whether to repair and expand the building, or construct an entirely new building with ample space and modern conveniences.

In 1899, the state's legislators voted to build a new capitol. The site chosen was found about a mile west of the Old State House — a hilltop plot occupied by the due-for-replacement state penitentiary. After the July 4, 1899 groundbreaking ceremony, inmates became builders: prisoner crews leveled the old prison buildings, excavated for foundations and worked on the new Capitol, living onsite as late as 1910.

Missouri architect George Mann designed the original plans for the Arkansas State Capitol and oversaw the project until 1909. The work was slow with a series of delays brought on by cost overruns, budget shortfalls and even charges of bribery. The state eventually replaced Mann with New York-based Cass Gilbert, best known at the time for his designs for the Minnesota State Capitol and New York's landmark Woolworth Building.



State Capitol around 1914

Gilbert acted quickly to remove substandard materials and revise the interior design. Features and materials that were chosen to cut costs were upgraded. Marble for the floors and wall panels came from Vermont, while the grand staircases were carved of Alabama stone. Elegant fluted columns were quarried in Colorado. Hard, lustrous Batesville, Arkansas, limestone formed the exterior walls while a softer Indiana limestone was used for the dome.

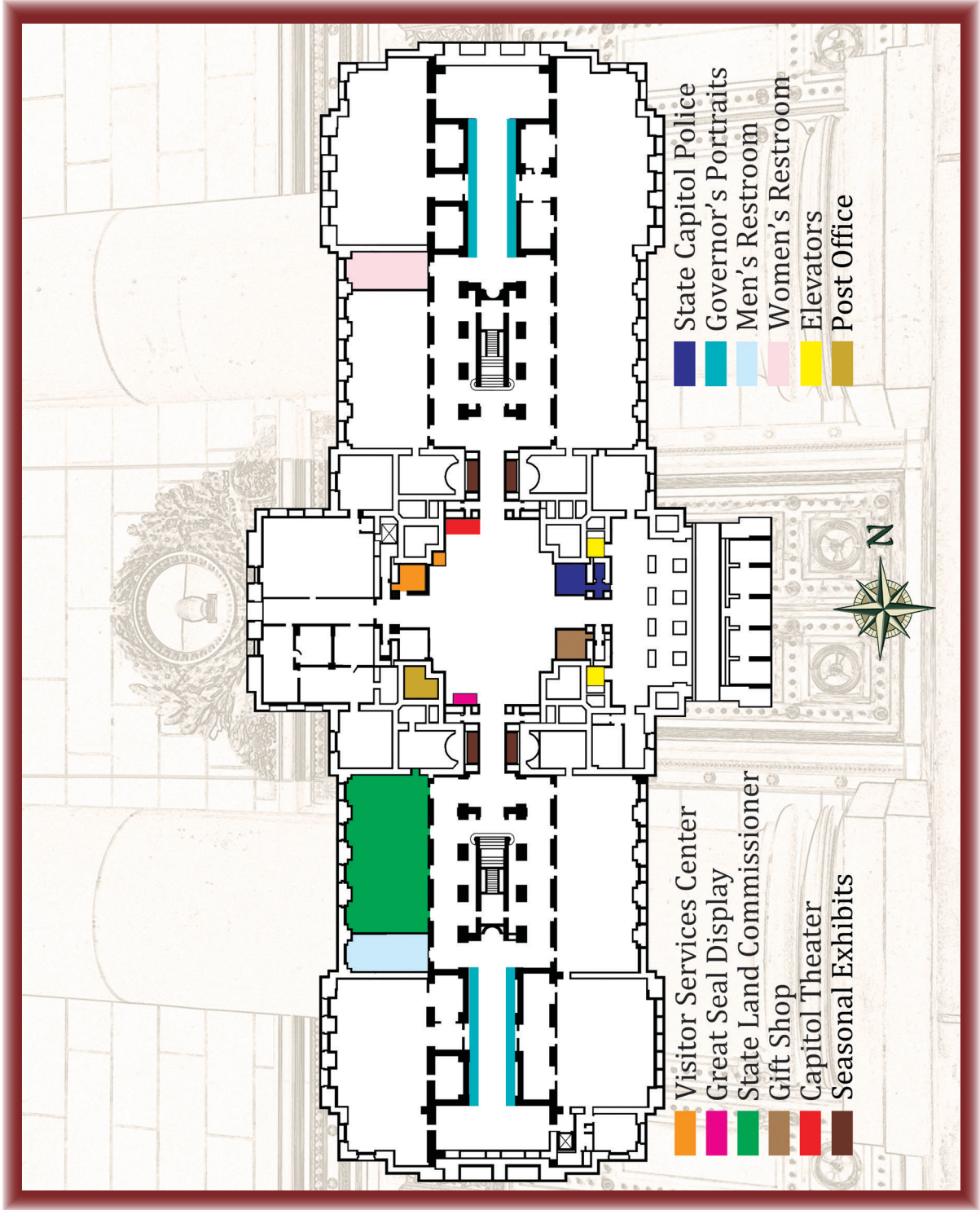
The legislature first met in the unfinished State Capitol in 1911, although it lacked permanent heating, lighting and many furnishings. The Capitol was not officially declared complete until January 1, 1915. The final cost of the project topped \$2.2 million, surpassing the initial budget of \$1 million.

Today, the neo-classical Arkansas State Capitol looks much as it did in 1915. It measures 440 feet north to south, 196 feet east to west and covers nearly 287,000 square feet. The distance from ground level to the top of the dome's cupola is 213 feet. It is topped by a ball finial that is covered in gold leaf.



State Capitol Today

# First Floor



## The First Floor

Begin your tour in the first floor rotunda. Notice the lighted stained-glass rendering of the Great Seal of Arkansas in the southwest corner. Adopted by the state legislature in 1864, the seal includes 16 elements linked to aspects of Arkansas's history and economy. These symbols include the goddess of Liberty, an angel of mercy and the sword of justice. The eagle is holding emblems of both peace and war in its talons. Inside the shield are emblems of the state's 19th century economy such as steamboat transportation, agriculture and industry.



### *Exhibits and Displays*

In the north and south corridors of the first floor, adjacent to the lower rotunda, four exhibit cases offer changing installations that interpret and celebrate aspects of Arkansas's rich history, culture and attractions. They are curated by a team of archival experts who often use items donated by various organizations in Arkansas.

### *The Commissioner of State Lands*

The office of the Commissioner of State Lands dates back to Arkansas's earliest days. During the territorial period, the Land Office administered and recorded the transfer of federal lands to private ownership. Many of those original land records remain in its holdings, such as handwritten field notes and plat maps from the first survey of the Louisiana Purchase, Spanish Land Grants and Military Bounty Lands from 1812.



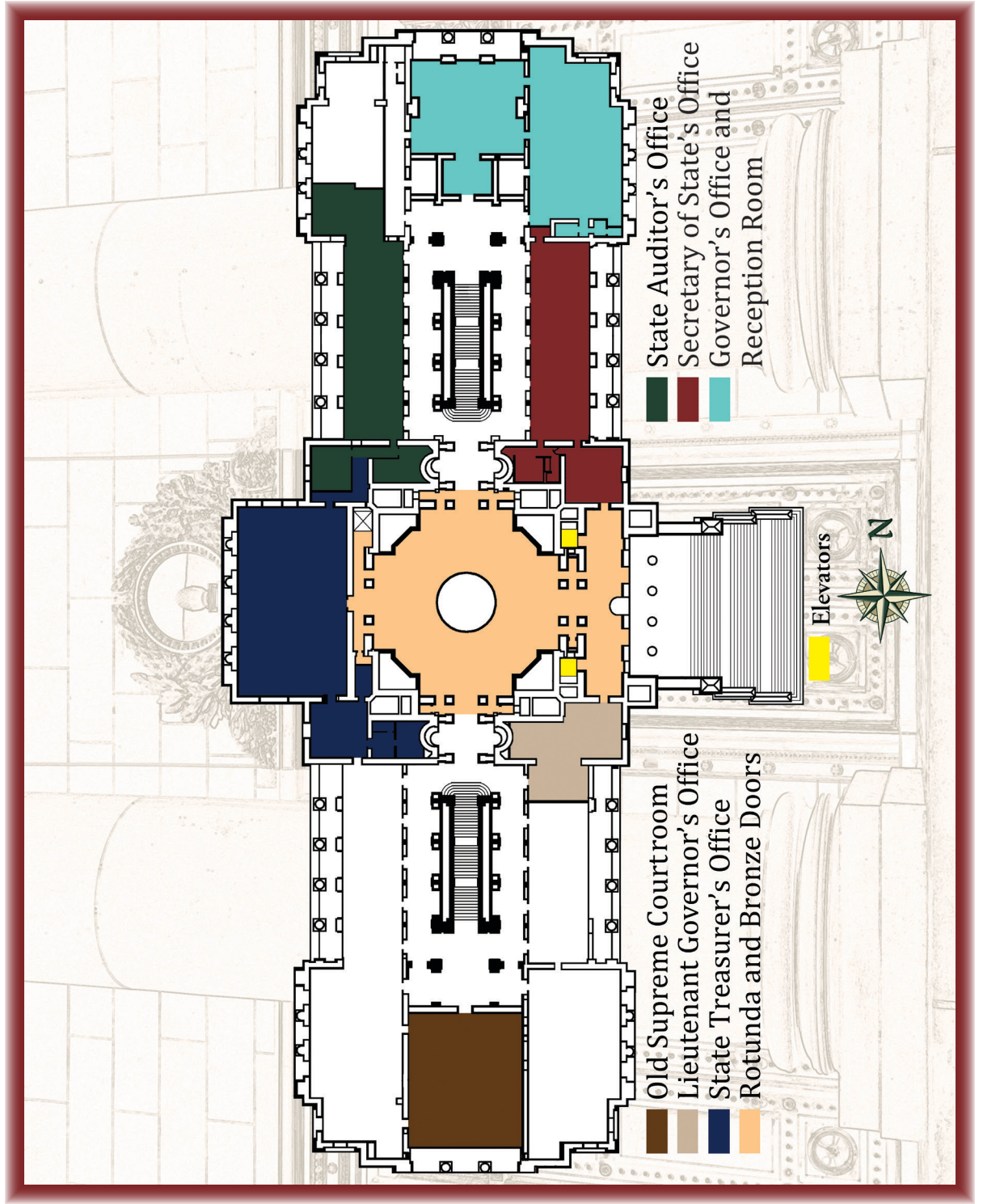
In early 2013, the Commissioner of State Lands unveiled its renovated Capitol offices that made many of

those records available for public view. Climate-controlled vaults, exhibit space and research facilities bring artifacts to light, many for the first time in more than a century. The restoration also uncovered beautiful hardwood floors that are original to the Capitol's construction.





# Second Floor



# The Second Floor

## Governor's Reception Room

The Governor's Reception Room is both a public room and the governor's dedicated conference space, used for staff meetings, press conferences, bill signings and other public events. Originally decorated with ornate plaster moldings, the room's décor was revised by Cass Gilbert to reflect the Craftsman style, emphasizing simpler designs and undisguised natural materials. At each end of the room, Batesville limestone mantels and figured marble inserts surround ornamental fireplaces. The east mantel features carved heads representing the state's historic Native American populations; the west mantel's carvings call to mind the early European explorers and settlers.



The silverplate chandelier, candelabras and sconces, as well as the rich quarter sawn oak paneling, are original to the room. The wall and ceiling finishes duplicate the 1914-vintage decorative painting.

Two portraits hang above the room's fireplaces. The space above the east fireplace holds the portrait of the governor immediately preceding the incumbent. Above the west mantel, in the position of highest honor, hangs the likeness of

Governor George Washington Donaghey (1909-1913). Because of his leading role in completing the Capitol, after political scandals and infighting led to the project being defunded, Donaghey is remembered as the father of the Capitol.

The room's central conference table was crafted of walnut from a tree planted by Donaghey's father on the family's farm in Conway, Arkansas. In 1935, Donaghey presented the table to the Capitol to commemorate the state's 100th birthday.

The north-facing windows offer views of "Testament" (the Little Rock Nine monument), the Arkansas Bicentennial Monument and, in the distance, the Arkansas River."



*Governor George Donaghey*



## The Rotunda

This grand central space hosts public meetings, speeches, hearings and rallies. Portraits of the four past governors featured in the rotunda include one of former Governor Bill Clinton, Arkansas's native son, the 42nd President of the United States.

In 2013, the interior dome underwent a major project to repair plasterwork and return the dome to its original 1914 appearance. The first layers of paint were analyzed in order to re-create the original colors. In all, 16 shades of paint and decorative glazing were used to highlight ornate molded plaster and recreate finishes that had been lost under a century's worth of overpainting.



### *Decorative Elements*

Suspended from the ceiling by a 73-foot chain, the rotunda chandelier weighs more than 4,000 pounds and is approximately 12 feet in diameter and 18 feet in height. One of several light fixtures fashioned for the Capitol by the Mitchell-Vance Company of New York, this grand, intricate chandelier incorporates over two thousand brass, copper, zinc, iron and glass parts.

The six 10-foot-tall bronze doors, located on the east side of the rotunda, were designed by Cass Gilbert, made by New York's Tiffany Studios in 1910 and installed in 1910, at a cost of \$10,000. In order to keep the uncoated bronze surfaces bright, as the architect intended, the 1300-pound doors are polished by hand, inside and out, every week.

The east-facing doors served as the main public entrance for most of the Capitol's first century. Since September 11 2001, however, visitors have entered the Capitol through its ground-level doors and security stations staffed by the State Capitol Police.

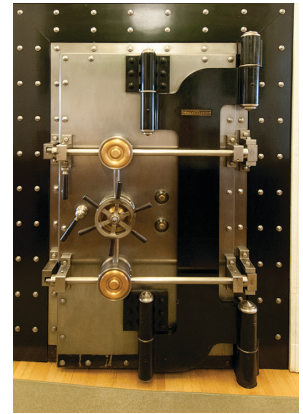




## The State Treasurer's Office

### *The Vault*

The office of the State Treasurer, located on the west side of the Rotunda, contains a vault secured by a series of four doors and three time locks. The 11-ton main vault door presented a stiff challenge to construction crews. Loaded onto conventional animal-drawn wagons, it sunk axle-deep. Ultimately, a rail spur track was laid to the west side of the building to carry the door. It was then hoisted through a hole in the west wall, using blocks, tackle and a steam winch. The vault holds only small amounts of cash, and its present function is mainly decorative and symbolic.



## Old Supreme Courtroom

The Arkansas Supreme Court met in this room, located at the south end of the Capitol's second floor, from 1912 through 1958. In 1958, due to increased space needs, the Court moved to the new Justice Building located southwest of the Capitol. The former courtroom is now used for legislative committee meetings, lectures and press conferences.

### *Restoration*



The room's original furnishings include its brass handrails, the mahogany rail, the judicial bench (enlarged in the 1920s to accommodate the court's addition of two justices), light fixtures, ornamental plaster and the high-backed justices' chairs.

In 1999-2000 the room was restored to its early appearance, which included recreating its 1914 decorative paint finishes and installing period-appropriate chairs and tables, as well as carpet and drapes that closely resembled the originals. Paint deterioration led to a

second restoration in 2018; sophisticated re-analysis of original paint samples allowed restorers to more faithfully recreate the former courtroom's luster.

Shapes and symbols drawn from classical architectural ornamentation decorate the courtroom's ceiling and cornices. The latter feature a recurring pattern of triglyphs and three distinct *metopes*, or decorative panels, bearing symbols related to principles of justice or the law.



➤ Green Shield

A symbol of defense or watchfulness, a reminder of law's role in protecting society



➤ Gray Shield

A ship's anchor, with a dolphin twined along its shank. The anchor is a traditional representation of safety or sureness, while the dolphin was the fastest known creature of the seas. The two symbols combined create a third one, embodying a favorite maxim of the Emperor Augustus: *Festina Lente*, or "Make haste, slowly"—a reminder that good justice should be both swift and sure.



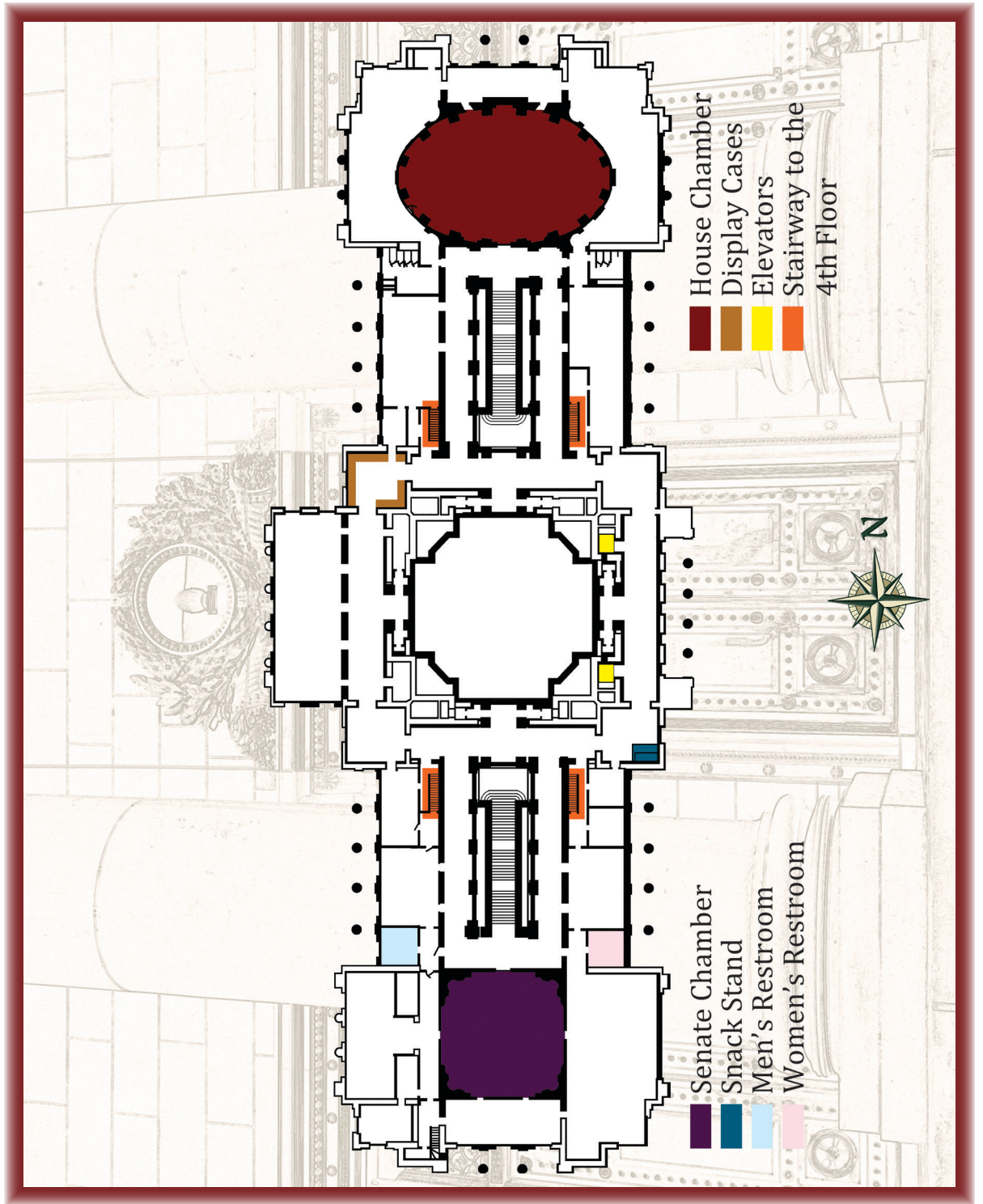
➤ Terra Cotta Oil Lamp

The lamp is a traditional symbol of wisdom or enlightenment, the guiding spirit of good law.

The Courtroom's windows overlook the Capitol's South Mall and grounds, with views of the War of 1812 Memorial, the American Legion Eternal Flame, the Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial and, to the southwest, the Capitol Iris Beds (in season) and the present home of the Arkansas Supreme Court.



# Third Floor





# The Third Floor

## Heerwagen Murals

Above the grand staircases leading to the House and Senate chambers are four murals, visible at the ends of the barrel-vaulted skylights. The themes represented over the south (Senate) staircase are Education and Justice; over the north (House) staircase, War confronts Religion. These murals, the only public art commissioned for the new Capitol, came from the studio of Paul Martin Heerwagen, a Bavarian-born artist and interior decorator from Fayetteville, Arkansas. His commission for the work was \$10,000. Completed in October 1914, the oil-on-canvas murals were originally glued directly to the plaster walls below the skylights. The murals were restored between 1977 and 2002. “War” and “Religion” have since been removed for conservation; they are represented by full-scale replicas.



Education



Justice



War



Religion

## The State Senate

The state's legislative body, called the General Assembly, is composed of the State Senate and the House of Representatives. The Arkansas State Senate meets in the chamber located at the south end of the Capitol's third floor. *(If the chamber doors are closed, you can visit the public galleries, located on the Fourth Floor.)* The Senate consists of thirty-five members, each of whom represents a district of approximately 85,000 people.

Arkansas senators may serve a combined amount of time in both the Senate and the House of 16 years. The seating arrangement in the Senate is determined by seniority. The Lieutenant Governor serves as the President of the Senate and sits at the marble desk at the front of the room. The President Pro Tempore is elected by fellow senators to preside over the Senate on occasions when the Lieutenant Governor is absent.

Senate votes are taken by roll call. When a senator's name is called, he or she responds with a ye or nay vote; then the votes are tallied and the result is read aloud.

### *Meeting Times*

The General Assembly meets in regular session beginning the second Monday in January in each odd-numbered year (2015, 2017, 2019...). The regular session lasts for a minimum of 60 days, but can be extended by a two-thirds vote of both chambers.

The General Assembly also convenes for a fiscal session beginning the second Monday of February in each even-numbered year (2016, 2018, 2020 etc.). This session lasts for a minimum of 30 days and may be extended up to 15 days by a three-fourths vote of both chambers. The governor may also call a special session if specific issues need to be addressed in the interim.

### *Decorative Features*

The Senate chamber was restored in 2001-2002. The decorative painting replicates the original décor applied by artist Paul Martin Heerwagen in 1914. The Senate President's marble desk is original, as is the 1,200-pound chandelier, the smallest of the Mitchell-Vance chandeliers in the building. In 1914, stained glass replaced the original crystal glass of the skylight in order to reduce



the sun's glare; at about the same time, the first of several generations of draperies in the dome was installed to improve the room's acoustical properties. Outside the chamber and in adjacent galleries hang composite portraits of past Arkansas legislatures. The public viewing galleries are located in the balcony (fourth floor).

# House Chamber

## *Legislative Body*

The Arkansas House of Representatives consists of 100 members, each representing a district of approximately 30,000 persons. Ninety-nine representatives are assigned to seats on the chamber floor, while one, chosen by his or her peers, serves as House Speaker, or chamber leader, and sits on the rostrum at the front of the chamber. Next to the Speaker sits the Parliamentarian, who interprets and enforces the rules of debate during each session. House clerks occupy the lower rostrum spaces and the space directly in front of the rostrum is styled the Well of the House; legislators stand here when introducing and speaking in favor of bills.

## *Architectural Elements*

The columns and pilasters in the House chamber are finished in scagliola, a mixture of gypsum plaster, glue, pigments and marble dust applied over a base surface, then polished, to simulate the look of marble. The scagliola, gilded capitals and other features were restored in 2009. The chamber's original individual desks have been replaced several times; curved desks resembling those originally designed for the chamber (but never built) arrived in 2018. The 2000-pound Mitchell-Vance chandelier is original to the room. The exterior "greenhouse" protecting the stained-glass dome was rebuilt in 2012 and the century-old stained glass skylight, as well as the ceiling and the chamber's decorative finishes, underwent restoration in 2014. At that time the ceiling drapes, installed in the 1920s to improve the room's lively acoustics, were removed.

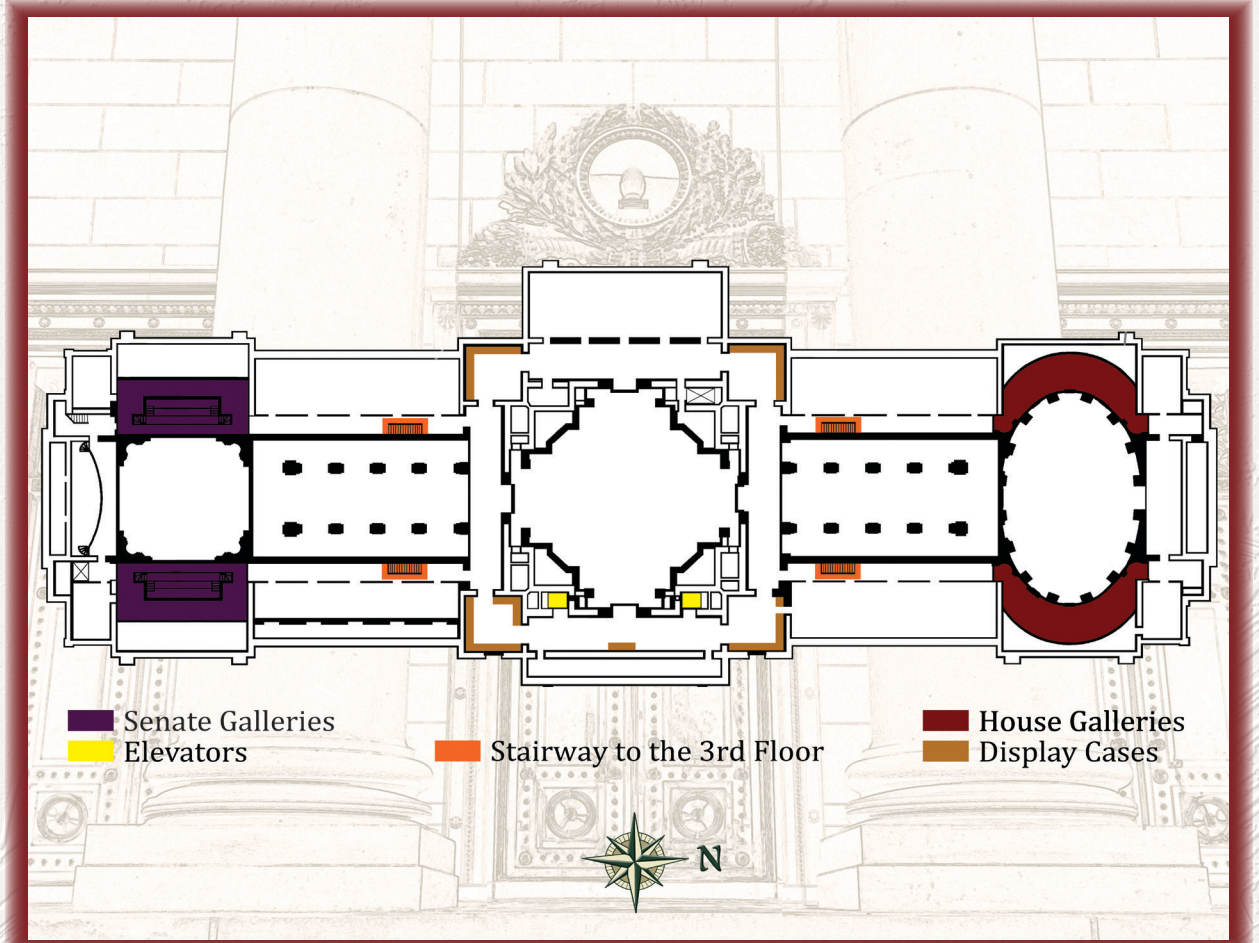
## *Voting Procedure*

Representatives use the buttons at their desks to transmit votes to the chamber's electronic voting system. The green button transmits a "yea" vote; the red a "nay" vote; the yellow signals the member is present, but not voting; the blue to request a page; and the white to request to speak. Votes are displayed on the screens at the front of the chamber, and then tallied electronically to show the final vote totals.

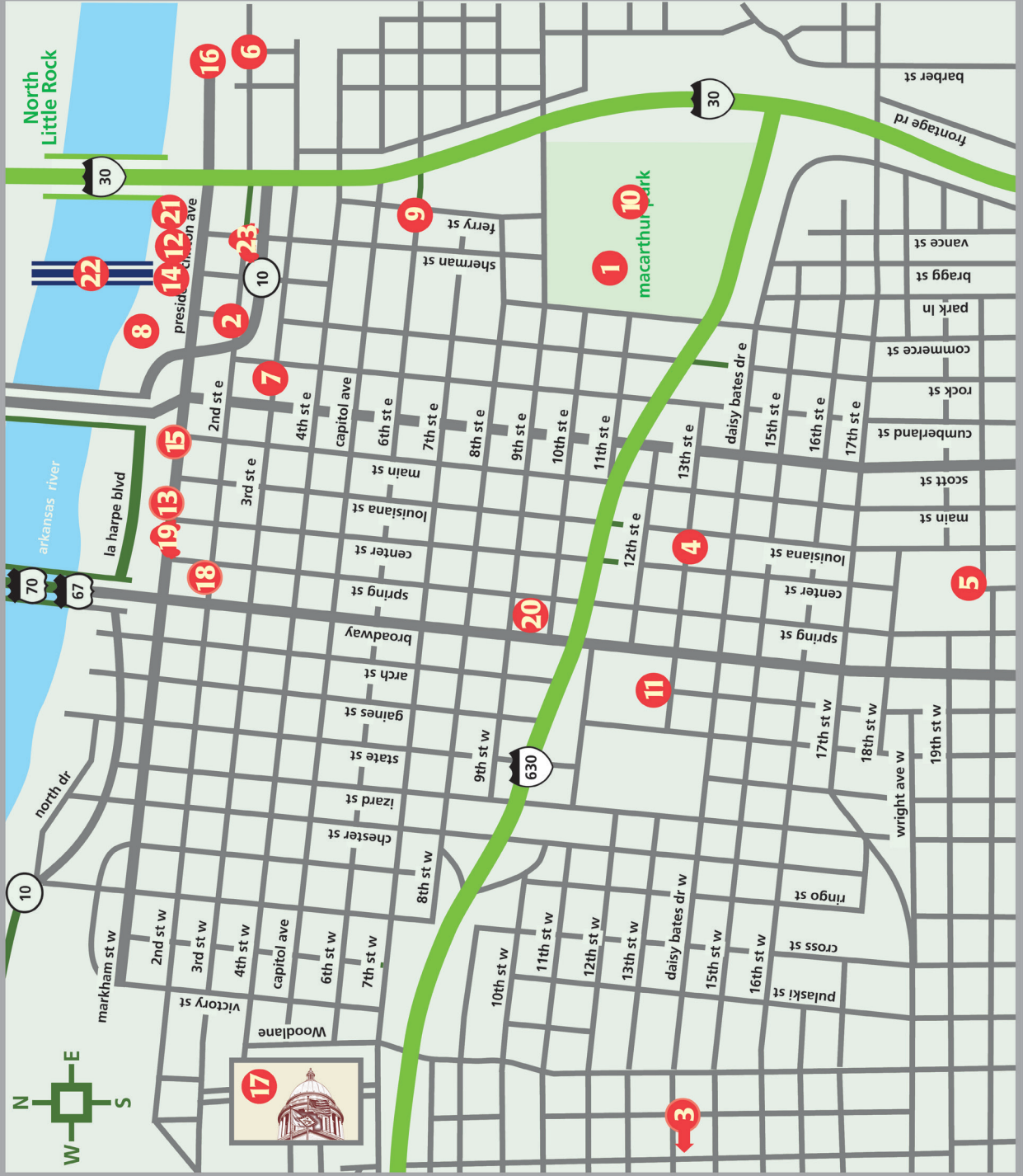
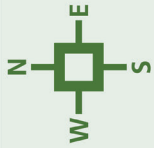




# Fourth Floor



We hope you have enjoyed exploring the Arkansas State Capitol. As you make your way back down to the first floor, please take time to view the permanent exhibits on the third and fourth floors (see maps on pages 11 and above). Also notice the framed composites — or “class photos” — of each General Assembly that has convened here. And don’t forget to pick up a memento of your visit at the Capitol Gift Shop, open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays in the first-floor rotunda.





# Downtown Little Rock Attractions

1. Arkansas Arts Center, 10th & Commerce
2. Central Arkansas Library System, Cox Creative Center, 120 Commerce
3. Central High School Historic Site & Museum, 2125 Daisy Bates Drive
4. EMOBA: The Black Museum of Arkansas and Performing Arts, 1208 Louisiana
5. Governor's Mansion, 17th & Center
6. Heifer International, One World Ave.
7. Historic Arkansas Museum, 200 E. 3rd
8. Little Rock Marker, La Petit Roche, North end of Rock Street in Riverfront Park
9. Little Rock Visitor Information Center at Curran Hall, 615 E. Capitol
10. MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History, 503 E. 9th Street
11. Mt. Holly Cemetery, 12th & Broadway
12. Museum of Discovery, 500 President Clinton Avenue
13. Old State House Museum, 300 W. Markham
14. River Market, Dining, Arts & Entertainment District, President Clinton Ave.
15. Statehouse Convention Center, Markham & Main
16. William J. Clinton Presidential Center & Park, 1200 President Clinton Ave.
17. Arkansas State Capitol, Capitol & Woodlane
18. Pulaski County Court House, Markham & Spring
19. Municipal Parking Garage, Markham & Spring
20. Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, Broadway and 9th Street
21. Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center, 602 President Clinton Avenue
22. Junction Pedestrian Bridge
23. River Market Parking Garage, 2nd and Commerce

Compliments of  
**Office of the Arkansas Secretary of State**  
Map courtesy of Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau



The background of the page features a large, faint, circular seal of the Arkansas Secretary of State. The seal contains the text "THE SECRETARY OF STATE" around the top and "ARKANSAS" at the bottom. In the center is a figure holding a torch and a scroll, surrounded by stars. Below this is a shield with a landscape scene, flanked by two figures. A banner across the shield reads "REGNAT POPULUS".

## **Arkansas Secretary of State**

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## **Visitor Services**

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[www.sos.arkansas.gov/state-capitol/  
state-capitol-tour-information](http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/state-capitol/state-capitol-tour-information)