

## Welcome to the U.S. Capitol

Your visit to the historic U.S. Capitol begins as you enter the Capitol Visitor Center. With its soaring spaces and skylight views of the Capitol dome, the Visitor Center welcomes you on a journey of discovery. The Capitol is home to the U.S. Congress and its two legislative bodies, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Through films, exhibits, and tours, you will learn about how Congress works, how this magnificent building was built, and how citizens can participate in this extraordinary experiment called representative democracy.

### LOCATION AND HOURS

The Capitol Visitor Center, the new main entrance to the U.S. Capitol, is located below the East Plaza of the Capitol between Constitution and Independence Avenues.

Visitors: The Visitor Center is open to the public from **8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday**. It is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Inauguration Day.

Official Business: Visitors with official business appointments may enter the Visitor Center as early as 7:15 a.m.

### GUIDED TOURS OF THE CAPITOL

Guided tours of the Capitol begin at the Orientation Theaters on the lower level of the Capitol Visitor Center. "Out of Many, One," a 13-minute film, illustrates how this country established a new form of government, highlights the vital role that Congress plays in the daily lives of Americans, and introduces you to the building that houses the U.S. Congress.

**Tours are free, but tour passes are required.**

**Tour hours: 8:45 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Monday – Saturday**

**Advance Passes:** Tours may be booked in advance online at <http://tours.visitthecapitol.gov> , through our office, or through the Office of Visitor Services by calling (202) 226-8000.

**Same-Day Passes:** A limited number of passes are available each day at the tour kiosks on the East and West Fronts of the Capitol or at the Information Desks in Emancipation Hall on the lower level of the Visitor Center.

## WATCHING CONGRESS IN SESSION

**Hours:** The Senate and House Galleries are open to visitors whenever either body is in session. In addition, the House Gallery is open 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday, when the House is not in session.

**Passes:** Passes are required to enter either gallery at any time. Visitors may obtain gallery passes **before their tour** from **our office at 1713 Longworth House Office Building**. Gallery passes are available for international visitors at the House and Senate Appointment Desks on the upper level.

## DINING AND GIFT SHOPS

**Restaurant (Lower Level):** Freshly made soups, salads, specialty entrees, pizza, sandwiches, desserts, and beverages reflect the diverse bounty of America. **Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday – Saturday.**

**Gift Shops (Upper Level):** A unique selection of merchandise inspired by the Capitol's art and architectural treasures, fun and educational gifts, books, jewelry, and exciting custom-designed products make excellent souvenirs. **Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Saturday.**

## EXHIBITION HALL (LOWER LEVEL)

Here you can explore the only exhibition in the country dedicated to telling the story of Congress and the construction of the U.S. Capitol. Exhibit highlights include rarely seen historic documents from the National Archives and the Library of Congress, artifacts from around the country, and an 11-foot-tall touchable model of the Capitol dome. You may also watch the action on the floors of both chambers of Congress at the House and Senate theaters when

Congress is in session. Numerous interactive stations allow you to discover more about Congress, its Members, and the Capitol. **Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Saturday.**

### **LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ACCESS**

Visitors have direct access from the Capitol Visitor Center to the historic Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress, one of the nation's great treasures, via the Library of Congress Tunnel. The entrance to the tunnel is located on the upper level of the Visitor Center near the House Appointment Desk.

### **VISITOR TIPS**

All areas of the Visitor Center are smoke free.

**Strollers and Baby Changing:** Strollers are permitted in the Visitor Center and baby-changing stations are available in each family restroom.

**Public Telephones and ATMs:** These are located outside each Gift Shop.

**Foreign Languages:** Visitors may request listening devices for foreign-language versions of the films and the exhibition at the Information Desks.

**Visitors with Disabilities:** Visitors may request wheelchairs from Capitol Visitor Center staff wearing red vests or at one of the Information Desks in Emancipation Hall. Sign-language interpreting for tours is available when booked in advance. Listening devices with audio description of the films and exhibition are available at the Information Desks. All films have open captioning.

**Service Animals:** Service animals are allowed in the Visitor Center and the Capitol.

### **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

Before entering the Capitol Visitor Center, all visitors are screened by a magnetometer and all items that are permitted inside the building are screened by an x-ray device.

### **Prohibited Items**

- **Any bag larger than 14" wide x 13" high x 4" deep**
- Aerosol containers
- Any pointed object (i.e., knitting needles, letter openers, etc. Note: pens and pencils are permitted.)
- Cans and bottles
- Electric stun guns, martial arts weapons or devices
- Food or beverages of any kind
- Guns, replica guns, ammunition, and fireworks
- Knives of any size
- Mace and pepper spray
- Non-aerosol spray (prescriptions for medical needs are permitted)
- Razors and box cutters

**The following are allowed in the Capitol Visitor Center and the Capitol, but not in the Senate and House Galleries:**

- Battery-operated electronic devices (Medical devices are permitted.)
- Cameras
- Creams, lotions, or perfumes
- Strollers
- Video recorders or any type of recording device

### **RESPECTING CAPITOL ART**

During your visit, help preserve the Capitol's statues and other works of art. Enjoy looking at the, but do not touch them – each touch does some damage.

### **IN THE EVENT OF AN EVACUATION AT THE CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER:**

- Proceed to the nearest exit – exit up stairs
- All emergency exits at the Visitor Center are located on the Upper Level
- Follow direction of U.S. Capitol Police
- If assistance is needed, seek U.S. Capitol Police help

**More information about the Capitol Visitor Center can be found at [www.visitthecapitol.gov](http://www.visitthecapitol.gov)**