



Home	Bill Information	California Law	Publications	Other Resources	My Subscriptions	My Favorites
------	------------------	----------------	--------------	-----------------	------------------	--------------

AB-2667 State Capitol Building Annex: historic symbols. (2017-2018)

SHARE THIS:  

Date Published: 09/07/2018 04:00 AM

Assembly Bill No. 2667

CHAPTER 283

An act to add Section 9105.5 to the Government Code, relating to state government.

[Approved by Governor September 06, 2018. Filed with Secretary of State September 06, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2667, Cooley. State Capitol Building Annex: historic symbols.

Existing law, known as the State Capitol Building Annex Act of 2016, authorizes the Joint Rules Committee to pursue the construction of a state capitol building annex or the restoration, rehabilitation, renovation, or reconstruction of the State Capitol Building Annex, to be administered and supervised by the Department of General Services, as provided.

This bill would require that any work of construction, restoration, rehabilitation, renovation, or reconstruction undertaken pursuant to these provisions (1) incorporate elements complementary to the historic State Capitol, elements to make the newly constructed state capitol building annex or the restored, rehabilitated, renovated, or reconstructed State Capitol Building Annex efficient and sustainable, and historic elements from the existing State Capitol Building Annex; (2) integrate design elements that educate and impress upon visitors the rich heritage of symbolism of the historic State Capitol design; and (3) incorporate symbolic treasures, as provided. The bill would make various findings and declarations as to the history and symbolism of the State Capitol and the intent of the Legislature as to the elements of any newly constructed state capitol building annex or the restored, rehabilitated, renovated, or reconstructed State Capitol Building Annex.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) When California was admitted to the Union as the 31st state of the United States on September 9, 1850, having being transferred from Mexico by the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, California stood out among the earliest states of the Union as not having been previously administered as a territory of the United States.

(b) As its state government became established, and in particular as Sacramento was settled upon as the location of the state's capital, construction of a fitting capitol building began in earnest in 1860. The resulting State Capitol took shape as a tribute to American participatory democracy and the ideals of self-rule and was very clearly a symbol of self-rule first and a functioning building second.

(c) The symbols that early Californians incorporated into their capitol to convey key precepts of democracy are many and varied, and include the following:

(1) Governance safeguarding society. The story of the west pediment statuary group is the keystone of all the State Capitol Building's symbols, enriching the meaning of the bears on our state flag, state seal, and in the west wing tile floors. The embellishments atop the pediment, depicting a grizzly bear attacking a Native American man on horseback and a buffalo charging a Native American maiden who is also atop a horse, make the point that there are hazards in the world that put people and communities at risk. The triangular pediment below, however, portrays civil society and the imposing central figure, Athena, also known as Minerva, depicts civil power, the offensive tool of a lance held at her right and a protective shield held at her left. The panorama's key lies below her shield, where the artist placed a subdued grizzly, brought to heel by civil authority, its head and muzzle barely peeking out for observers below.

(2) The California Brown Bear. The idea that civil government can tame life's hazards reappears in the docile bears on the California state flag and seal and in the first floor tile corridors. Bears, all recognizably California brown bears, share with our state their important qualities of strength and independence, which support the vigor and pathfinding characteristic of California, even while, like the grizzly in the pediment, they do not appear as wild, but subdued, indeed walking as a dog might, controlled and under authority.

(3) The narrative of Athena, also known as Minerva. On the state seal, in the Capitol's first floor tiles, as a face gazing outward from above each second floor rotunda entry, and high above the Senate dais are representations of a mythological figure, Athena, as she was known to the Greeks, or Minerva, as she was known to the Romans. In each tradition, Athena or Minerva was the goddess of wisdom, war, commerce, and art. She was adopted to symbolize the young state of California because she was never an infant, as she sprang into being full-grown from the head of her father, Zeus for Athena and Jupiter for Minerva, similar to California's direct entry into the Union as a state on September 9, 1850.

(4) Frail democracy's bundle of sticks. The most oft-repeated symbol in the Capitol and its surrounding park is the bundle of sticks, tied together, known as a fasces. The fasces had its origin in ancient Rome where it symbolized the magistrate's power and jurisdiction. As used in the State Capitol, the symbol expresses the idea that, while a single person may be brittle and weak, when many are joined together, as in a democratic form of government, the whole possesses a strength and flexibility that surpasses that of an individual. In the State Capitol Building and its surrounding park, the symbol is present throughout the central and south monumental wooden staircases in the west wing, on the massive second floor doors through which visitors can view the Tower Bridge in the distance and cast in the iron of every lamp which dots the expanse of the park. For every Californian, the inspiring quality of this symbol is enriched by the fact that, in Washington, D.C., it appears throughout the United States Capitol and the Library of Congress in the same representative sense as in Sacramento, and also graces the Lincoln Memorial. On the Memorial, it adorns the great chair where Abraham Lincoln sits, appearing twice, below each hand, symbolizing his singular role in keeping the union together and not letting it be torn asunder by hate and factionalism.

(5) Union Forever and California enriching the Union. In the State Capitol, the importance of California's participation in the Union that Lincoln preserved is symbolically emphasized by the similar, yet distinct, statuary that adorns the north- and south-facing porticos. On the south, two figures clasp their hands in a gesture of oneness in front of a shield topped by an eagle that together symbolize the American Union. On the north portico, two figures reappear, but now they hold papers of some apparent significance, and the eagle is again present, as is the barest glimpse of the underlying shield, which is now topped by the California state seal. Together, they honor the importance of California's place within the larger union of states and of California's addition in the years immediately after Marshall's discovery of gold. The importance of California's role on its own behalf, and also as part of the larger national union, which is depicted in the north and south portico statuary, is also expressed in the oath of office sworn in the State Capitol, and for every other California public office, in the pledge and duty to "support and defend" the Constitution of the United States and the California Constitution.

(6) Owl of wisdom. Only one set of original entry doors remains in the west wing, which were for the originally intended grand second floor entry to the State Capitol Building. This set of entry doors richly conveys how important early Californians regarded the many west wing symbols. The doors incorporate the bundle of sticks, bears' heads, and a beautifully modeled owl, an ancient symbol of wisdom.

(7) Grizzly bear safeguarding the public fisc. Above the vault entrance to the historic Treasurer's office vault on the first floor of the west wing is a cast iron grizzly bear head with its long claws in the foreground. The bear's left paw rests on the folds of a heavy canvas money bag and below its muzzle is a pile of gold coins. The symbol, conveying the responsibility to safeguard the public fisc, now adorns the second floor rotunda wall with 16 copies of the unique symbol looking down upon visitors to the State Capitol.

(8) The State Capitol's status as California's premier public building was emphasized by the Californians who built it by incorporating pineapples throughout. The democratic conception of a State Capitol open to all was important to the early Californians who built it. The west and south doors where the public would have originally entered led directly to monumental staircases that opened the building to them. On those staircases, pineapples are suspended overhead from the bottom of each newel post, a symbol of hospitality common in public buildings of this vintage. The association of this fruit with a welcoming

hospitality arose in the 1800s, when to serve pineapple in one's home or establishment in the continental United States was seen as an act of extraordinary welcome and generosity since it had come to that table from the Hawaiian Islands.

(9) Light and views of the world outside the Capitol play an important role in the Capitol's symbolism in celebrating the notions of accountability, transparency, and concern for the State of California outside the State Capitol in all California's varied communities. Sixteen round windows, high on the rotunda wall, bring the outside light in, both directly and indirectly according to the time of day and the weather outside. Atop the rotunda, a large round window, known as the oculus, also adds to the experience of natural light within the historic wing. The historic wing's second floor portico doors, and doors on the first floor, which offer openings to view the outside and symbolically bring the outside in to the heart of the State Capitol, again reflect the state government's place as part of society and connected to society as the purpose of its important stewardship of the public realm and public good. It is also worth noting that, during the State Capitol Building restoration that occurred from 1975 to 1982, inclusive, this opening of the building to light and views of the outside was embodied in the expansive skylights that dominate the central area of each north and south wing fourth floor workspaces. Such daylighting has become an architectural device of even greater design significance in the 21st century than it was in the 19th century.

(10) California's agricultural productivity is celebrated throughout the historic west wing, notably in the 32 horns of plenty that emerge from the columns beneath the 16 round windows high on the rotunda wall to spill a cornucopia of agricultural produce from banners of food products to adorn the State Capitol. Banners of agricultural produce also appear on each leaf of the second wing west portico doors. Other symbols of California's abundance are also sprinkled throughout the State Capitol Building, including bunches of grapes, which are a common motif that still convey the story of California.

SEC. 2. Section 9105.5 is added to the Government Code, to read:

9105.5. (a) Any work of construction, restoration, rehabilitation, renovation, or reconstruction undertaken pursuant to Article 5.2 (commencing with Section 9112) shall do all of the following:

(1) Incorporate elements complementary to the historic State Capitol, elements to make the newly constructed state capitol building annex or the restored, rehabilitated, renovated, or reconstructed State Capitol Building Annex efficient and sustainable, and historic elements from the existing State Capitol Building Annex described in Section 9105.

(2) Integrate within its design elements that educate and impress upon visitors the rich heritage of symbolism that earlier generations of Californians made a vital part of the palette of the historic State Capitol design so as to convey the meaning of California's self-governance and the state's unique and ever-distinctive heritage.

(3) Incorporate symbolic treasures, as is befitting the heritage of symbols left by California's founders for current and future generations to enjoy and explore, so as to ensure that the legislative and executive branch working spaces in the newly constructed state capitol building annex or the restored, rehabilitated, renovated, or reconstructed State Capitol Building Annex are no longer barren and devoid of the enriching presence of those symbols of self-governance.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature that any newly constructed state capitol building annex or the restored, rehabilitated, renovated, or reconstructed State Capitol Building Annex be designed to welcome all visitors to a safe, healthful, accessible, and working State Capitol, including historic chambers supported by needed caucusing spaces, offices for the Chief Clerk of the Assembly, the Secretary of the Senate, and the Legislative Counsel; hearing spaces to facilitate the convenient conduct of hearings during sessions, and space for the Sergeants at Arms so that all Californians may effectively engage with their elected representatives and their state government in meaningful, participatory, and deliberative democracy.