



Memorandum

Congressman J. Randy Forbes
Virginia's Fourth Congressional District

TO: JRF
FROM: RD
SUBJECT: CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER COMPARISONS
DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2008
CC: CBG

- 1) While the CVC includes references to E Pluribus Unum, calling it our national motto, throughout the exhibits and the orientation video each visitor will view, even though it was never codified into law, there is no mention of “In God We Trust,” which was adopted as our official motto in 1956.
- 2) While the CVC mentions Jeannette Rankin, the first female member of Congress 15 times, there are only three references to Rev. Martin Luther King and no mentions of the significant role that churches played in the civil rights movement.
- 3) While the CVC includes inconsequential personal items like Senator Charles Sumner’s pocket watch, the CVC does not include items of historical and religious significance like the Aitken Bible of 1782 which was the only Bible ever printed by an act of the United States Congress.
- 4) While the CVC does reference that church services were held in the Capitol, it does not acknowledge that the services were held while Congress was in session, were attended by Members of Congress and Presidents of the United States, and that the Capitol was the largest church in Washington in 1867.
- 5) While the CVC has an entire section on “National Aspirations”, listing “unity, freedom, and general welfare” among them, it leaves out Providence and Prayer entirely, which are core commitments of the nation and its constitutional life, as the closing of the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin’s call to prayer at the Constitutional Convention and presidential proclamations calling our nation to days of prayer, fasting, thanksgiving, and remembrance demonstrate.
- 6) While the Preamble to the Constitution is referenced throughout the CVC, it is never displayed in its entirety, and a core example of “the blessings of liberty” which is religious liberty is completely ignored.
- 7) While the CVC includes photos such as an AIDS rally, Earth Day event, casino grounds, and a Connecticut factory producing locomotive wheels, it does not include photos of monumental religious events at the Capitol such as National Day of Prayer events, the Annual Bible Reading Marathon on the Capitol steps, or the March for Life for which hundreds of thousands come to DC annually.
- 8) While the CVC includes the table made for Abraham Lincoln used during his 2nd Inaugural Address and a photo of the table and swearing-in, it does not include Lincoln’s Bible which is also found in the photo or the actual text of his address in its entirety.
- 9) While the CVC acknowledges that ‘ancient drinking horns...inspired the design’ of an ornament in the Rayburn House Office Building, it does not acknowledge the religious iconography found in the Capitol and other federal buildings including Bibles, crosses, Biblical quotes, and Moses being the only lawgiver facing outward in the House Chamber.

- 10) While the CVC highlights Capitol architecture including rosettes and doorknobs with explanations and descriptions in great detail, it does not recount the religious and historical significance of all, nor show all of the 8 portraits hanging in the Rotunda which are: the Surrender of General Burgoyne, the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis, the Landing of Columbus, General George Washington Resigning His Commission, the Embarkation of the Pilgrims, Discovery of the Mississippi, Baptism of Pocahontas, and the Declaration of Independence .
- 11) While the CVC includes detailed information about Capitol services such as the Capitol post office, barbershop, carpentry shop, and the cabinet shop, as well as key people, including the Architect of the Capitol and Congress's attending physician, it does not provide a list of all House and Senate chaplains, including their faith backgrounds or say that the Prayer Room is used for 'prayer.'
- 12) While the CVC has a photo of Jeannette Rankin, the first female Member of the House, planting a tree, it does not include Members of Congress singing "God Bless America" spontaneously on the Capitol steps on 9-11.
- 13) While the CVC includes the "Suffragist," a weekly newspaper advocating women's right to vote, the CVC does not include the text of Dr. Martin Luther King's, "I have a dream" speech.
- 14) While the CVC describes Thaddeus Stevens, one of the prime Civil Rights Republicans during the American Civil War and Reconstruction, as "not particularly religious," it does not reveal that President Garfield was a preacher, that many of the framers of the Constitution were ministers, and that many other presidents were 'religious.'
- 15) While the CVC lists the "Pledge of Allegiance" during the order of business in the virtual House tour, it does not display anywhere in the Capitol Visitor Center the text of "the Pledge of Allegiance" which contains the phrase "one nation under God," an addition President Eisenhower signed into law in 1954.
- 16) While the CVC includes photos and captions highlighting poverty and struggles of immigrants, it does not highlight the reason many immigrants sacrificed to come to America: religious freedom.
- 17) While the CVC includes personal memorabilia such as a snuff box and walking stick of the Senate's Assistant doorkeeper, one who was responsible for helping maintain order on the floor of the Senate and in the galleries, it does not include the Great Seal with a full description of it, which includes several references to God and symbolizes the watchful eye of God and His favor on America's affairs.
- 18) While the CVC includes photos of 4th of July celebrations and photos of the American Flag, it does not include the text of our National Anthem or explain the design of our flag.
- 19) While the CVC does include photos depicting Native American Leaders meeting with governmental leaders, including the President, it does not include Christian and church leaders, like Billy Graham and Rev. Martin Luther King meeting with Presidents and governmental officials.