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**MEMORANDUM**

January 10, 2013

**TO:** Capitol Building Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Julia Jackson, Senior Researcher, 303-866-4788

**SUBJECT:** Presidential Portrait Gallery

**Summary**

This memorandum provides information about the state's Presidential Portrait Gallery, which is currently located in the east hall on the first floor of the State Capitol building. The portraits were relocated at the beginning of 2012 from the third floor rotunda to accommodate the renovation of the Capitol dome. All of the portraits are oil paintings on canvas, framed, with a plate below each listing the name of the president and his tenure in office. The memorandum provides a history of the portraits, the role of the Capitol Building Advisory Committee in overseeing their placement and maintenance, and a discussion of their current and former locations.

**History of the Presidential Portrait Gallery**

In January 1979, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Sullivan donated a collection of 38 original oil paintings, entitled "Gallery of Presidents," to the Colorado State Board of Education. The portraits were painted by artist Lawrence Williams of Burbank, California, on a commission from the Sullivans to celebrate the 1976 bicentennial of the United States. After circulating the collection throughout public schools across Colorado, a portrait of President Ronald Reagan painted by Mr. Williams was added to the collection, and the portraits were placed for permanent display in the Capitol. The collection was officially unveiled on August 1, 1982.

The Colorado Department of Education purchased the portrait of President George H. W. Bush from Mr. Lawrence in 1989 and donated the portrait to the state.

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The portrait of President Bill Clinton was also painted by Mr. Williams, who donated the portrait to the White House. When President Clinton left office, the painting became the property of the Clinton Library, which is managed by the National Archives. With the assistance of former Senator Doug Linkhart, the National Archives agreed to loan the portrait to the State of Colorado for display in the Capitol rotunda under the custodianship of the Legislative Council Staff. The portrait was unveiled by the Capitol Building Advisory Committee and Senator Linkhart during the 1996 regular legislative session.

The portrait of President George W. Bush was acquired by the Capitol Building Advisory Committee with funds donated by the Stroehle Family of Black Hawk, Colorado. The portrait was painted by Mr. Williams prior to his death in 2002.

The portrait of President Barack Obama was painted by Colorado Springs artist Sarah Boardman in a style similar to that of Mr. Williams. Ms. Boardman was selected by a group including members of the Capitol Building Advisory Committee in 2010. Fundraising for the portrait was led by former Representative Paul Weissman, former Denver Mayor Wellington Webb, and former Representative Wilma Webb. The portrait was unveiled in 2011.

The paintings in the gallery, other than the portrait of President Clinton, are the property of the State of Colorado, and as such, are under the custodial care of the Department of Personnel and Administration.

### **Clinton Portrait**

The portrait of President Clinton is currently held by the Clinton Library in Little Rock, Arkansas. Administrators from the National Archives requested the portrait's return for restoration when they learned that the rest of the collection would be removed for storage or temporarily relocated for the duration of the State Capitol dome renovation project. A representative of the Clinton Library has stated that the portrait will be returned once the dome restoration is complete, and that it will be loaned on a year to year basis. In the past, the loan was renewed annually since 1996, with the last extension expiring March 31, 2010. Loan conditions have included a requirement that the state send the library an annual report detailing the portrait's condition, as well as proof of insurance. Efforts by the state to obtain the portrait on a permanent basis have not been successful.

### **Committee Oversight**

The maintenance and location of the Presidential Portrait Gallery is under the authority of the Capitol Building Advisory Committee, although the collection is exempt from the committee's guidelines regarding the donations of art and memorials. Space on the first floor of the Capitol that is used by the executive department, including the west hall where the portraits are currently located, is not under the jurisdiction of the committee, although the committee may make recommendations concerning its use.

### **Portrait Gallery Location**

Some members of the Capitol Building Advisory Committee have suggested that the committee consider leaving the portraits in their current location on the first floor. This section identifies advantages and disadvantages to this location, as well as to the third floor rotunda.

**Third floor rotunda.** The Presidential Portrait Gallery was originally located in the third floor rotunda. At the time this location was selected, the following benefits to the location were given:

- tours ended on the third floor, so visitors were able to peruse the portraits at their leisure;
- the third floor had the fewest decorations; and
- natural lighting was available from the dome and skylights.

Committee guidelines prohibit any other exhibits from being displayed in any of the Capitol rotundas. According to the Department of Personnel and Administration, the portraits cannot be returned to the third floor rotunda until the dome renovation is complete, which is anticipated to be in the summer of 2014.

**First floor east hall.** The current location of the portraits on the first floor east hall was a temporary solution to keep the portraits from being placed in storage. A few tour guides have found advantages to this location in that it is easier to present the gallery to large groups of visitors. Additionally, with the portraits located on the first floor, tour guides may choose not to take their tours to the third floor during the legislative interim. (During the session, tours still go to the third floor to visit the House and Senate galleries, since they cannot go into the lobbies.)

Since more than a year still remains of the dome restoration project, it is possible that administrators of the Clinton Library might be more amenable to returning the Clinton portrait promptly if the portraits were given a permanent location on the first floor.

Currently, a gallery of Governors' portraits is located in the west hall on the first floor. Capitol Building Advisory Committee guidelines offer approved themes for locations throughout the State Capitol building, and Governors and Lieutenant Governors are identified as the theme for the west hall. The theme for the east hall is identified as state emblems, state symbols, and items of state significance.

Space for the Governors' portraits is limited in the west hall, however. When the portrait of former Governor Bill Ritter was completed in 2010, plans were made to move the older portraits to the east hall to leave space for future governors' portraits. Committee guidelines identify this as an acceptable option; however, the move did not occur, which permitted the relocation of the Presidential Portrait Gallery. Further, committee guidelines state that no more than six Governors' portraits should be hung in each hall. Currently, eight portraits hang in the west hall. Committee guidelines also specify the order in which the Governors' portraits are to be hung.

Additionally, because the executive branch has authority over the first floor of the State Capitol building, the committee's oversight of the Presidential Portrait Gallery could be diminished by keeping the gallery on the first floor.