

May 5, 2026

re: Eisenhower Executive Office Building Exterior BEAUTIFICATION Project (NCPC File #8777)

To the Chairman and Members of the National Capital Planning Commission:

As a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and a practicing architect for the past 36 years, I write to oppose the proposed painting of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building because in my opinion this would:

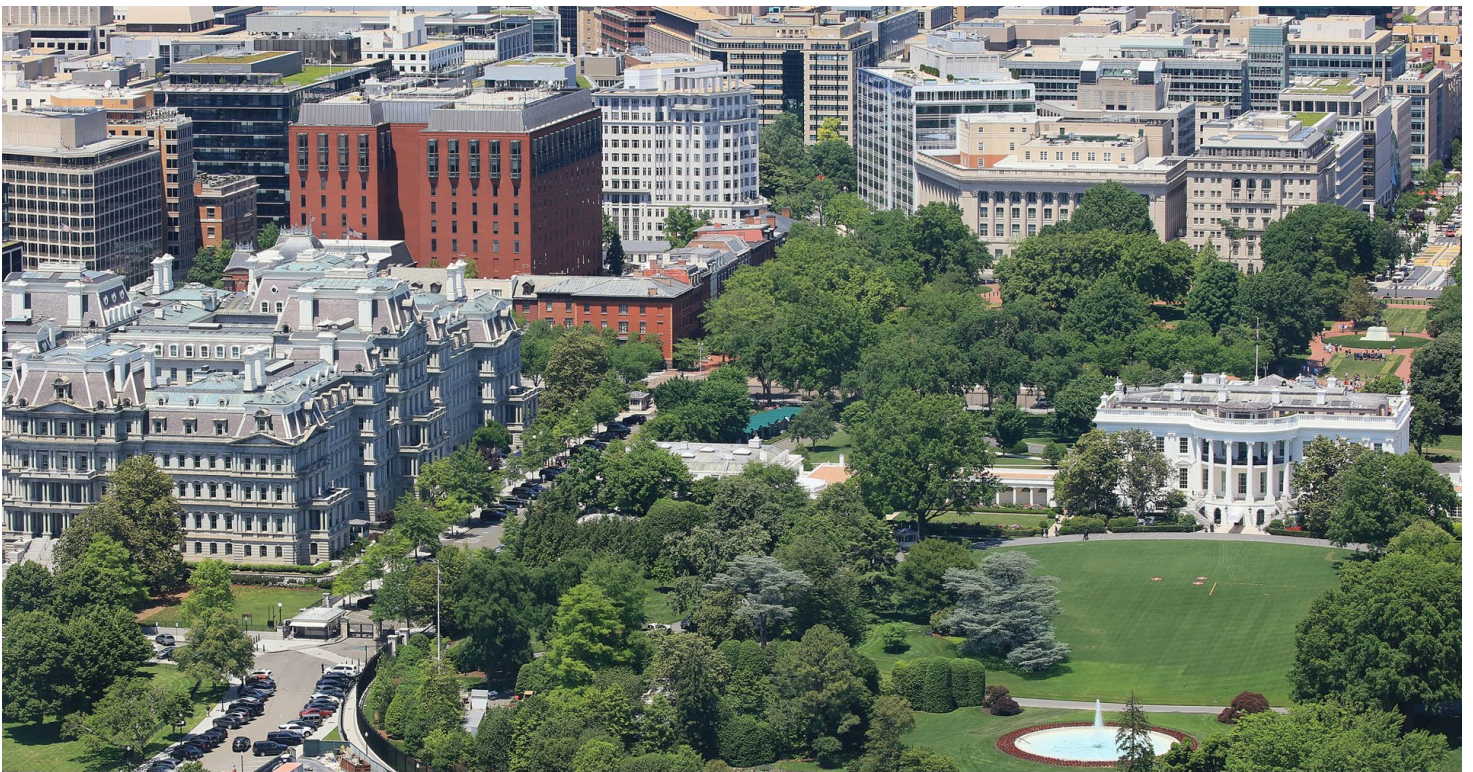
1. **VIOLATE THE DESIGN INTEGRITY OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK:** The polychromatic granite is an integral part of this Landmark structure's design with its complementary slate roof. One of the best examples of French Second Empire Architecture in America, the building has stood for over 150 years unpainted, and the unpainted granite was SPECIFICALLY cited as a major reason for it being listed as a rarified National Historic Landmark.
2. **TRAP MOISTURE IN THE STONE AND ITS MORTAR JOINTS.** Painting stone, especially stone with a cleft/thermal face, can cause innumerable problems. Granite is a NATURAL MATERIAL and needs to BREATHE. Hermetically sealing stone negates its ability to adapt to changing moisture conditions, trapping salts and particulates while causing ferrous metal iron ties to rust, expand and potentially crack the stone. Granite is an excellent exterior material *UNLESS* painted. Even paints that claim to be "breathable" still hinder moisture and are even more difficult to remove from the stone pores.
3. **NECESSITATE SUBSTANTIAL ONGOING MAINTENACE COSTS.** Once a stone building has been painted, it must be repainted frequently, potentially every 5-7 years. Given its intricate façade elements—the immense building has over 900 stone columns and pilasters plus intricately carved cornices—repainting the 135' high structure will be exorbitantly expensive requiring cleaning, scraping and enormous scaffolding that will be up for months or years each time. Painting EEOB will add substantially to the ongoing taxpayer expense to maintain the building.
4. **PERMANENTLY DISFIGURE THE CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING.** It would be virtually impossible to remove the paint once this building has been coated--requiring sandblasting and other deleterious techniques, causing irreparable harm to the stone as well as damage to its 1,572 wood windows.
5. **IMPROPERLY ASSOCIATE IT WITH THE APPEARANCE OF THE WHITE HOUSE.** Although next to the historic home of the President, the Eisenhower Executive Office Building is not—and never was intended to be—an architectural extension of it. The EEOB's footprint and granite exterior complement and balance the U.S. Treasury opposite which is also made of unpainted granite. Both buildings were conceived as city blocks architecturally independent from the President's House and—as the following aerial photos demonstrate—relate to the urban fabric of the city, *NOT* the intentionally smaller scale and parklike setting of the White House.
6. **DISRESPECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR STANDARDS AND DISREGARD THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE'S OWN PRESERVATION BRIEF GUIDELINES.** As a National Historic Landmark, the impacts of any work on this structure should be carefully evaluated relative to the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, as well as the National Park Service's still valid FIRST Preservation Brief that focused on the harmful effects of painting masonry. Painting not only violates EEOB's integrity, it also improperly impinges on the White House and President's Park.

RELATES TO THE CITY'S URBAN FABRIC--ARCHITECTURALLY INDEPENDENT FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

The EEOB occupies a small city block and forms part of the urban fabric of Washington



Carol Highsmith/Library of Congress



EEOB is adjacent to, but architecturally independent from, the White House

EXPOSED GRANITE IS INTEGRAL TO ITS ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER AND LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Basis for EEOB being listed as a NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK:

- **Architectural Significance (Criterion 4):** As an outstanding example of the French Second Empire style, it features a distinctive mansard roof, central pavilions, and an ornate, detailed granite facade.
- **Historic Significance (Criterion 1 & 2):** The building is directly associated with crucial events and national figures in U.S. history, originally serving as the State, War, and Navy Department Building.
- **Integrity:** The original 19th-century features, including its unpainted granite and slate exterior.

The building is also the Lafayette Square National Historic Landmark District, added in 1971. The nomination highlights its importance in the study of a specific, elaborate period of construction. [National Archives \(... +2\)](#)



PAINING OVER STONE can be problematic due to:

- ***Moisture intrusion***
- ***Hydrostatic pressure***
- ***Freeze-thaw cycles***
- ***Internal spalling***
- ***Mineral crystallization***
- ***Efflorescence***

Potentially leading to biological growth and ongoing, previously unnecessary, EXPENSIVE MAINTENANCE

...Subsequent paint removal would require harsh SANDBLASTING



PAINTING GRANITE BUILDINGS CAUSES PROBLEMS, UNNECESSARY EXPENSE AND IS IRREVERSIBLE

The National Park Service's *FIRST* Preservation Brief in 1975 focused on the harmful effects of painting masonry and the hazards of then trying to cleaning it off.

The cautions cited in this National Park Service publication are still considered valid and very relevant today—50 years later. This OFFICIAL publication of the National Park Service should be considered and serve as the benchmark against which the current proposal to paint the EEOB should be weighed.

1 PRESERVATION BRIEFS

Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings

Robert C. Mack, AIA
Anne Grimmer



U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources
Heritage Preservation Services

Inappropriate cleaning and coating treatments are a major cause of damage to historic masonry buildings. While either or both treatments may be appropriate in some cases, they can be very destructive to historic masonry if they are not selected carefully. Historic masonry, as considered here, includes stone, brick, architectural terra cotta, cast stone, concrete and concrete block. It is frequently cleaned because cleaning is equated with improvement. Cleaning may sometimes be followed by the application of a water-repellent coating. However, unless these procedures are carried out under the guidance and supervision of an architectural conservator, they may result in irrevocable damage to the historic resource.

The purpose of this Brief is to provide information on the variety of cleaning methods and materials that are available for use on the exterior of historic masonry buildings, and to provide guidance in selecting the most appropriate method or combination of methods. The difference between

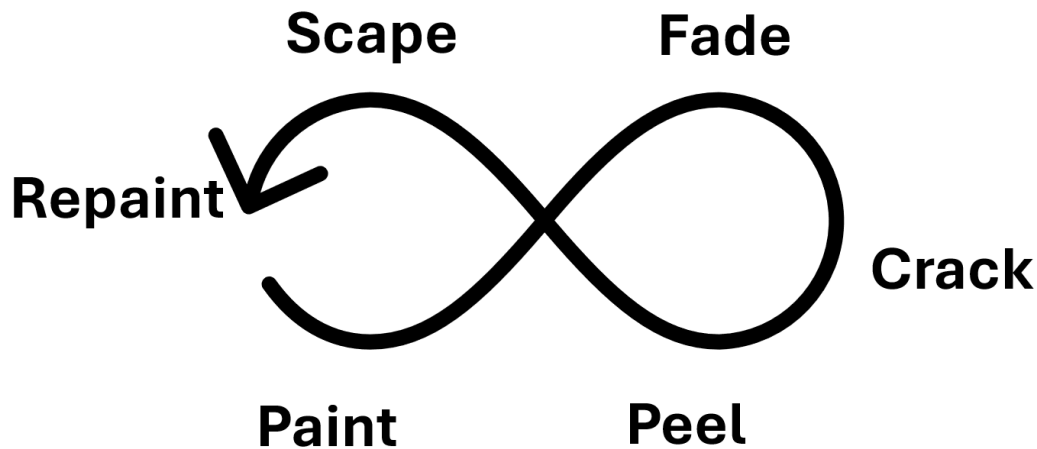
water-repellent coatings and waterproof coatings is explained, and the purpose of each, the suitability of their application to historic masonry buildings, and the possible consequences of their inappropriate use are discussed.

The Brief is intended to help develop sensitivity to the qualities of historic masonry that makes it so special, and to assist historic building owners and property managers in working cooperatively with architects, architectural conservators and contractors (Fig. 1). Although specifically intended for historic buildings, the information is applicable to all masonry buildings. This publication updates and expands *Preservation Brief 1: The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonry Buildings*. The Brief is not meant to be a cleaning manual or a guide for preparing specifications. Rather, it provides general information to raise awareness of the many factors involved in selecting cleaning and water-repellent treatments for historic masonry buildings.



Figure 1. Low-to-medium-pressure steam (hot-pressurized water washing), is being used to clean the exterior of the U.S. Tariff Commission Building, the first marble building constructed in Washington, D.C., in 1859. This method was selected by an architectural conservator as the "gentlest means possible" to clean the marble. Steam can soften heavy soiling deposits such as those on the cornice and column capitals, and facilitate easy removal. Note how these deposits have been removed from the right side of the cornice which has already been cleaned.

CLEANING AND REPAINTING may be necessary every 5 to 7 YEARS *



A Permanent, Vicious and Extraordinary Costly Cycle

* Federal Performance Contracting Coalition (2025)

PAINTING EEOB WILL CAUSE IT TO COMPETE WITH AND OVERWHELM THE WHITE HOUSE

EXISTING RELATIONSHIP

This is a composite photo with the “existing” granite-faced EEOB superimposed on the aerial view to show its current relationship to the White House. The two buildings are architecturally **INDEPENDENT**-and always have been.



PROPOSED RELATIONSHIP

COMPARE with this **PROPOSED** view provided by the applicant as part of the current submission to NCPC. Note how the white paint makes the EEOB more dominant and pronounced-- **OVERWHELMING** the historic White House.



For all the reasons stated above and more, I respectfully urge the National Capital Planning Commission to deny the proposed painting of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and to respect the 150 year original integrity of this American Landmark with its complementary yet intentionally independent relationship to the adjacent White House, the most highly revered symbolic, historic home in America.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "David Scott Parker".

David Scott Parker, FAIA