



National Trust *for*
Historic Preservation®

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the National Capital Planning Commission.

My name is Rob Nieweg and I speak here today on behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our comments about the proposal before you, to paint the exterior of the historic Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

We urge the National Capital Planning Commission to consider these points in connection with your mission to preserve and enhance Washington's extraordinary historical and cultural assets.

After our review of the information that has been made available to the public, the National Trust is concerned about the severe and irreparable adverse effects of the proposed exterior change to the historic EEOB.

I am going to use my time here to highlight three points which led us to that conclusion.

First, the Eisenhower Executive Office Building is a *contributing element* of the Lafayette Square Historic District and, importantly, this architecturally significant building is a *National Historic Landmark*.

That is our nation's most coveted historic designation. It serves as permanent notice to all that the EEOB occupies an important place in our collective story as Americans.

Accordingly, the EEOB's federal steward should respect the aesthetic characteristics that qualify the landmark for NHL designation.

For example, the subtle and rich, polychromatic appearance of the granite walls, slate roof, and cast-iron detailing, were all carefully chosen by the landmark's architect Alfred B. Mullet. The design, color, and materials here are integral to EEOB's architectural significance and are character-defining features.

It is a basic tenant of preservation to *protect* the character-defining features of landmarks, instead of concealing them behind layers of paint.

Second, this proposal will, over time, *physically damage* the landmark.

Coating the EEOB's exterior surface with an impermeable layer of paint would trap moisture within the masonry, and lead to cracking, scaling, and spalling on the building's exterior.

If that weren't enough, painting the building would require new cycles of continued assessment, repainting and cleaning, *perpetually, forever*, which is needlessly expensive for future taxpayers.

Third, painting the building would be *irreversible*.

Removing paint from a masonry surface is difficult, costly, and inevitably degrades the surface.

The historic EEOB has been preserved, un-painted, since its completion in 1888.

In sum, painting the exterior now would obscure the landmark's historic appearance, undermine its character-defining features, and accelerate the building's deterioration. These are three undeniable reasons to reject this ill-considered proposal to paint the exterior of the historic Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Thank you for considering the views of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.