



---

## CALIFORNIA CAPITOL HISTORIC PRESERVATION SOCIETY

---

P.O. BOX 188155 • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95818 • (916) 448-8357 • FAX (916) 492-2477

March 31, 2020

The Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom  
Governor of the State of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

The media is so caught up in covering the Corona virus plague that most legislative news has been ignored since the Legislature is in recess. As a result, disappointing news of the recent resignations of two eminent professionals, the Chair of the Historic State Capitol Commission, Richard Cowan, and Commissioner Paula Peper, an urban ecologist, were overlooked. These Capitol Commissioners resigned in protest because they were shut out of their statutory duties to review construction documents for the proposed new Capitol annex.

The enabling legislation, SB836, Chapter 31, curtails public review so that the Legislature can quickly approve the project with minimal changes. The annex construction bill also changed CEQA requirements to mitigate preservation standards. Presumably this would avoid legal challenges by preservationists and others in order to expand the proposed annex into Capitol Park and also construct a parking garage underneath the tree-laden historic park, which will call for the destruction of many age-old, historic trees.

Mr. Cowan, a construction engineer who worked on the Capitol Restoration Project (completed in 1982), claimed that Commissioners were denied critical documents from your administration and the Legislature dealing with the proposed construction of a new Capitol annex. In addition, administrative and legislative staff were directed not to respond to the Commission's questions and queries. "The entire process has been secretive," according to Commissioner Peper, "kept from the Commission and the public at large." (See attachment letters.)

Another major concern of the Historic Capitol Commissioners is that the Assembly Contingent of the Joint Rules Committee has not replaced a Commission vacancy for over a year despite qualified candidates desiring to serve. With another vacancy recently created, there will no longer be a Commission quorum to conduct business.

---

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Hon. Burnett Miller, *Chairman*  
Audrey Tsuruda, *Vice Chair*  
George Basye  
Raymond Girvigian, FAIA  
Alfred C. Harrison, Jr.  
Hon. Alan Sieroty  
Donald Stover  
Hon. Mervyn M. Dymally

### Past Members

Hon. Dennis Carpenter  
Hon. George Zenovich  
Hon. John Moss  
James McClatchy  
Nathaniel Colley, Esq.  
Herbert Caplan  
Carla Hills  
Larry Margolis

### Honorary Members

Edmund G. (Pat) Brown  
(Governor of California, 1959-1967)  
Ronald Reagan  
(Governor of California, 1967-1975)  
(President of the United States, 1981-1989)  
George Deukmejian  
(Governor of California, 1983-1991)  
Jessee M. Unruh, Treasurer  
Robert K. Puglia, Presiding Justice  
(3rd Appellate District Court of Appeal)

**Daniel Visnich**  
*Executive Secretary*

Christine Henderson  
*Curator*

For perspective, at the first initial meeting of the Commission September 6, 1985, the minutes read:

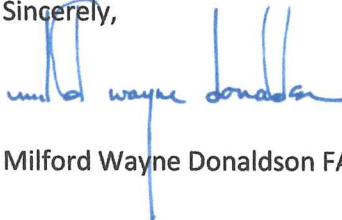
"Joint Rules Chairman Louis Papan and Kathy Snodgrass, the Assembly Speaker's legal Counsel, also addressed and welcomed the Commissioners. Both stated, as did Senator Petris [Joint Rules Subcommittee on CRP], that the *'members should view themselves as an independent body and assume their responsibilities, despite potential conflicts with the Legislative leadership'*. Assembly Papan stated that the Legislature was happy to relinquish some of that responsibility. The Speaker also wanted to relieve the Joint Rules Committee of some of the day-to-day tasks, Ms. Snodgrass said."

Thus, this reprehensible behavior against the Commission and the Historic State Capitol is completely unjustified. However, the national and state economy is so broken now due to the Corona virus plague that it doesn't make sense to continue constructing a new Capitol annex. Governor Brown left you a \$21.5 billion surplus budget plus a \$16.5 billion "rainy day" reserve. From a moral stand point, it is shameless to continue construction by abolishing historic preservation standards. It is better to save Capitol Park.

Now that the economy has changed, it is necessary to use those funds for the public good. To do otherwise, to continue construction of a new annex, would be outrageous with the economic effects of the plague. The best that the government can do straightaway is to use those surplus funds for distraught and suffering Californians.

We urge you to call on the Legislature to do the right thing -- stop construction of a new wasteful annex that will not meet historic preservation standards of the federal government. Previously, the Legislature flouted CEQA requirements to build sports arenas to kill any environmental challenges, which apparently emboldens them to encroach on Capitol Park, already smothered with monuments, turning it into a virtual cemetery. The Legislature can meet its space needs by remaining in the 12-story building being constructed at 11th and O Streets, across from the State Archives building. It would be a waste to construct a new Capitol annex when the Legislature can utilize that building permanently.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Milford Wayne Donaldson". The signature is stylized with a large "M" and "W".

Milford Wayne Donaldson FAIA, Chair, California Capitol Historic Preservation Society  
former California SHPO; former Chair,  
President Obama's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

And on behalf of:

Raymond Girvigian FAIA, Capitol Restoration Historic Architect Emeritus  
Honorable James Mills, former President pro Tem of the Senate  
Honorable Alan Sieroty, former Chair, Senate Education Committee

cc: Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon  
Senate pro Tem Toni Atkins  
JRC Chair Ken Cooley  
California Preservation Foundation  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
AIA, Central Valley Chapter  
Dept. of Interior National Register