

**Remarks of Greg Werkheiser**  
**Founding Partner, Attorney at Law, Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC**  
**Counsel to the DC Preservation League**  
**On the President's Plan to Paint the Eisenhower Executive Office Building White**  
**To the U.S. Commission on Fine Arts**  
**At the National Building Museum, Washington, DC**  
**April 16, 2026**

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Good afternoon, Commissioners and staff. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Greg Werkheiser. I am legal counsel to the DC Preservation League, one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit alleging that the administration has failed to follow federal law in pursuing the President's plan to paint the EEOB.

We are here, in plain terms, because this is a terrible idea—and apparently no one seems to have the courage to tell the President “no.”

**Let me start with the expert consensus.**

A group of 25 of the world's leading architects, architectural historians, and specialists in historic masonry and paint were surveyed on this exact proposal—this building, this material, this paint. These are professionals who have managed some of the most important restoration projects in American history, including the White House and the U.S. Capitol. Many have trained in Europe in the use of the very paint systems being proposed here.

Together, they represent more than 650 years of experience.

They were asked ten questions. There was complete consensus on every one.

Their conclusions are straightforward:

- Do not paint the granite—under any circumstances, and with any type of paint, including mineral silicate paint. The claimed benefits of this coating depends on a chemical bond that cannot occur with granite. Granite simply does not have the properties required for that bond.
- Paint does not strengthen granite or protect it. It requires abrasive preparation that permanently damages the surface. It traps moisture and accelerates deterioration. Stains will still occur—only they will be more visible against white paint.
- Once applied, the paint cannot be removed without further significant damage. Maintenance will be far more frequent and far more costly—effectively

continuous. This building will become the Golden Gate Bridge: by the time painting is finished on one end, it will be time to begin again on the other.

- And beyond cost and damage, painting will increase national security risks by requiring constant scaffolding and personnel around a highly sensitive site.
- Finally, there is unanimous agreement that changing the color of the EEOB's granite would be historically inappropriate and visually disruptive.

These are not abstract opinions. These are the experts who will appear in court. Their testimony will be weighed against any finding that this proposal is appropriate.

Chairman Cook, Vice Chairman McCrery: we have carefully reviewed the construction and renovation projects with which you have been associated in your lengthy careers. We could not identify a single instance in which either of you has recommended painting historic granite. If we are mistaken, we would welcome the opportunity to review those examples.

To approve this proposal, you would also need to depart from your own precedent. During the Kennedy administration, this Commission explicitly advised that the EEOB's exterior should not be altered, and that any cleaning should be limited to gentle removal of surface grime.

You would also be departing from longstanding federal guidance. The same government that seeks your blessing to commit this harmful act to this National Historic Landmark has, for nearly half a century, stated clearly that painting historically unpainted granite is unwise, unwarranted, and harmful. That standard remains unchanged.

I have found no evidence of any Commissioner now seated having made any efforts to change or challenge that portion of the Secretary of Interior's standards.

So, the question is simple: on what basis would you depart from your own precedent, from federal standards, and from unanimous expert guidance?

Because the President thinks it will be prettier?

That is not the reasoning any of us wants to be offering three years from now, when the President is no longer in office.

When the paint is peeling, the granite is failing, the white surface is stained, scaffolding is permanent, exorbitant costs are mounting—and the public comes to you for answers, will you stand by your vote to bless this ludicrous project?

This is not a serious proposal. Even putting substance aside, the procedural deficiencies alone should end the inquiry here.

The proposal before you contain no meaningful detail: no identified materials, no defined process, no qualified experts, no case studies, no long-term performance data, no lifecycle cost analysis, and no serious assessment of visual or operational impacts.

What we are hearing instead is that the government intends to experiment—on a National Historic Landmark.

That is not how this process is supposed to work.

You should deny this proposal. Or, at a minimum, you should delay any decision until the legally required review processes under NHPA and NEPA are completed and provide you with the information necessary to make an informed judgment.

To decide now, on this record, would be the definition of arbitrary and capricious—the standard by which a court will review your decision.

Thank you for your time.

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**Remarks of Marion Werkheiser**  
**Founding Partner, Attorney at Law, Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC**  
**On Behalf of Cultural Heritage Partners**  
**On the President's Plan to Paint the Eisenhower Executive Office Building White**  
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Good morning, Commissioners, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Marion Werkheiser. I am a founding partner of the law firm Cultural Heritage Partners. I am here on behalf of the DC Preservation League—and I stand alongside the more 1,000 professional architects, preservationists, and design professionals who have submitted comments to you in the past several days.

This building matters—and that what is proposed here is not a matter of taste, but of permanence.

I want to make three points.

**First, painting the EEOB would cause permanent physical harm to the building.**

This is not a debated issue within the preservation field.

Granite is not meant to be painted. To apply paint, the surface must be abraded so the coating can adhere. Once applied, the paint traps moisture within the stone. Over time, that moisture causes cracking, flaking, and degradation of the surface.

And critically, once paint is applied to historic masonry, it cannot be removed without further damaging the stone.

There has been discussion of so-called “mineral silicate” paints. But as shown in the materials submitted to the White House, these coatings are effective on materials like limestone and sandstone—not granite, which lacks the chemistry required for proper bonding.

In fact, experts agree such paints may perform even worse on granite than conventional paint.

That conclusion is not abstract. It is shared by at least 25 of the world’s leading experts in stone conservation, historic materials, and preservation science, who have been surveyed on this exact question and have prepared sworn declarations for use in federal court if this project proceeds. Their views are clear and consistent: painting the EEOB’s granite will cause lasting damage to the building.

This is why the federal government’s own longstanding guidance says: do not paint historic granite.

**Second, painting would fundamentally alter one of the most important civic compositions in the United States.**

The EEOB was designed to showcase the natural tone and texture of its stone. That gray granite is not incidental—it is the design.

It also plays a critical role in the visual balance of this part of Washington. The EEOB and the Treasury Building frame and highlight the White House. Their gray tones allow the White House to stand apart as the singular white focal point.

If the EEOB is painted white—especially given its much larger scale—that balance is lost.

The White House will no longer read as the visual anchor of this civic space.

That is not a small aesthetic shift. It is a fundamental change to how one of the most important places in the country is experienced.

**Third, there are better, proven alternatives that achieve the stated goal—without harm.**

As your materials show, the building is overdue for cleaning. Conservation-grade cleaning can restore the granite's natural brightness and uniformity without altering the material itself.

Repointing can restore the clarity and durability of the masonry.

Modern lighting can dramatically enhance the building's presence, day and night, in ways that are fully reversible.

Even simple interventions—like window treatments that increase light reflectivity—can significantly lighten the building's appearance at low cost and no risk.

These are not theoretical ideas. They are standard, accepted, and effective preservation practices.

Finally, I want to close with a reminder of how this building has been understood across generations.

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan wrote of the Old Executive Office Building that it is “one of America’s finest examples” of its architectural style, and “an architectural treasure.” He noted that time had added to its dignity—and that its preservation reflects the best of our national character.

That is exactly right.

This building has endured for more than a century because each generation has chosen to preserve it—not to remake it.

## **Conclusion**

This proposal asks you to approve a permanent, irreversible change to a National Historic Landmark that:

- will damage the building's material fabric,
- will alter a defining civic landscape, and
- is unnecessary to achieve the stated goals.

There is a better path—one that enhances the building while respecting its history, its materials, and its role in our national identity.

I urge you to reject the proposal.

Thank you.

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