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Naming of House and Senate Office Buildings and Rooms: Brief Overview

Various procedures have been used to designate the names of House and Senate office buildings, as well as of rooms and spaces within the Capitol Complex.

The set of procedures used has varied depending on whether the space is controlled solely by the House, solely by the Senate, or by the House and Senate jointly.

In general, the process for naming House and Senate buildings, rooms, and spaces is not governed by formal rules or statute, but rather the precedents and historical practices of the House and Senate.

Naming Office Buildings

As shown in **Table 1**, Senate office buildings have been designated through the adoption of Senate resolutions.

As shown in **Table 2**, the House designated each of its first three office buildings by law. The Ford and original O'Neill office buildings were designated through the adoption of a House resolution, while the new O'Neill office building was designated by law (**Table 3**).

Table 1. Senate Office Buildings: Biographical Information on Senator, Legislation Related to Naming, and Building Occupancy Date

	Senate Office Building		
	Russell	Dirksen ^a	Hart
Named for	Richard Brevard Russell, Jr.	Everett McKinley Dirksen	Philip Aloysius Hart
Senate dates of service	1933-1971	1951-1969	1959-1976
Senator date of death	January 21, 1971	September 7, 1969	December 26, 1976
Naming vehicle	S.Res. 296 (92 nd Congress)	S.Res. 296 (92 nd Congress)	S.Res. 525 (94 th Congress)
Date resolution agreed to	October 11, 1972	October 11, 1972	August 30, 1976
Type of vote	Voice vote	Voice vote	Voice vote
Year of building occupation	1909	1958	1982

Source: Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>; *Official Congressional Directory, 115th Congress*, S. Pub. 115-7 (pp. 573-579); Congress.gov; and aoc.gov.

Note: S.Res. 295 (96th Congress), agreed to December 3, 1979, added the word “Senate” to the official building names.

a. Senator Dirksen previously served in the House (March 4, 1933-January 3, 1949).

Table 2. House Office Buildings: Biographical Information on Representative, Legislation Related to Naming, and Building Occupancy Date (Part 1)

	House Office Building		
	Cannon	Longworth	Rayburn
Named for	Joseph Gurney Cannon	Nicholas Longworth	Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn
Dates of service in the House	1873-1891; 1893-1913; 1915-1923	1903-1913; 1915-1931	1913-1961
Date of death	November 12, 1926	April 9, 1931	November 16, 1961
Naming vehicle	P.L. 87-453	P.L. 87-453	P.L. 87-453
Date legislation enacted	May 21, 1962	May 21, 1962	May 21, 1962
Additional information	Voice vote in House and Senate	Voice vote in House and Senate	Voice vote in House and Senate
Year of building occupation	1908	1933	1964 ^a

Source: Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>; *Official Congressional Directory, 115th Congress*, S. Pub. 115-7 (pp. 573-579); Congress.gov; and aoc.gov.

a. Date of initial occupation, with full occupancy the following year.

Table 3. House Office Buildings: Biographical Information on Representative, Legislation Related to Naming, and Building Occupancy Date (Part 2)

	House Office Building	
	Ford	O'Neill ^a
Named for	Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr.	Thomas Philip O'Neill, Jr. (Tip)
Dates of service in the House	1949-1973	1953-1987
Date of death	December 26, 2006	January 5, 1994
Naming vehicle	H.Res. 402 (101 st Congress) ^b	P.L. 112-237 and P.L. 114-254
Date legislation enacted or agreed to	September 10, 1990	December 10, 2016
Additional information	Voice vote	Designated as the Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. Federal Building by P.L. 112-237. Transferred from the General Services Administration (GSA) to the House of Representatives by P.L. 114-254.
Year of building occupation	1975	2014/2017 ^c

Source: Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>; *Official Congressional Directory, 115th Congress*, S. Pub. 115-7 (pp. 573-579); Congress.gov; and aoc.gov.

- The original O'Neill House Office Building, which was demolished in 2002, was also designated by H.Res. 402 (101st Congress). The current O'Neill building was formerly known as Federal Office Building No. 8.
- Prior to the adoption of the resolution, the building was known as House of Representatives Office Building Annex No. 2. The former O'Neill building, also designated by this resolution, had been known as House of Representatives Office Building Annex No. 1.
- Following a major renovation, the building reopened for occupancy in 2014. Some House offices were located there, and the building was transferred from GSA to the House in 2017.

Naming Other Rooms and Spaces

As stated above, the process for naming of rooms and spaces controlled by either the House or the Senate is not governed by rule or statute, but rather the traditions of the chamber. These procedures may vary over time.

In general, Senate rooms and spaces in the Capitol have been designated through the adoption of a Senate resolution. During a colloquy in 1981, both Majority Leader Howard Baker and Minority Leader Robert C. Byrd expressed a view that Senate spaces should be named by the entirety of the Senate, rather than a subset of its

membership. Senator Byrd stated, “I think this is the property of all of the citizens and I think it should be the Senate itself which should have the authority to name a room after any Senator, living or deceased” (*Congressional Record*, March 12, 1981, p. 4247).

House rooms and spaces in the Capitol frequently have been designated through the adoption of a House resolution. One room was designated through a vote of the Committee on Appropriations. Rooms in House office buildings have often been designated by the House Office Building Commission, often at the request of a House committee.

The great hall of the Capitol Visitor Center, which is space controlled by both the House and Senate, jointly, was named Emancipation Hall by P.L. 110-139.

Comparison to Other Forms of Commemoration

For additional information on other forms of commemorations, see CRS Report R43539, *Commemorations in Congress: Options for Honoring Individuals, Groups, and Events*, coordinated by Jacob R. Straus.

Additional Information

Additional information on each of the office buildings is available from the Architect of the Capitol:

- <https://www.aoc.gov/house>
- <https://www.aoc.gov/senate>

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