



**ROBERT C. BYRD  
UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE**

Charleston, West Virginia

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UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE



**The building is meant to be monumental, to inform the public about the concept of justice, and actively evoke the sense that the administration of justice is among the most noble functions of our society.**

Gary Hancy  
Design Partner, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

## CIVIC ARCHITECTURE—NOBLE REPRISE

During the late-19th and early-20th centuries, the U.S. government constructed more than 800 classically-styled buildings. As a result, Neo-Classicism came to represent the Federal presence in villages, towns, and cities across America and established a national architectural image that was replicated in countless public and commercial buildings until the 1940s. The Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse in Charleston, West Virginia, is a contemporary example of this longstanding architectural tradition and its symbolic language.

Reflecting the solemnity and noble principles of the American judicial system, the Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse is classical in disposition. It has a heavy stone base with rusticated masonry walls, a prominent cornice, and an imposing colonnaded portico. At the same time, it is thoroughly contemporary in its layout, function, and detail. It is the first courthouse designed using the 1991-revised *U.S. Courts Design Guide*, which updates space requirements and mandates separate and secure corridors for judges, prisoners, and the public. The courthouse also has state-of-the-art security systems. The result

is a building that establishes a strong civic presence while fulfilling the complex functional needs of today's courts.

Located on a prominent two-acre city block adjacent to other government and court buildings in the western end of downtown Charleston, the seven-story, 440,000-square-foot courthouse is the second-largest building in West Virginia. The generous site, surrounded by a grid of streets, was selected in order to create a traditional "courthouse square" composed of a free-standing building with four distinct façades and a spacious forecourt.

While dominant, the building is not overpowering. Through siting, form, materials, and details, it strives to relate to other Charleston civic landmarks. It rises above its surroundings as a visual counterpoint to the classical gold-domed state capitol designed by Cass Gilbert on the eastern end of downtown. Its play of volumes and carved stonework echoes the spare Art Deco municipal auditorium across the street, and its solid, dignified image complements the nearby 19th-century Richardsonian Romanesque county courthouse.



As a building inspired by classical precedents, the courthouse has a distinct base, middle, and top. The base is black granite. The middle is cast stone simulating rusticated limestone and is punctuated with rows of large and small windows. The top, which rises 45 feet, is crowned with an oversized, perforated metal cornice. The strong linear features of the building and pronounced cornice give the courthouse a sense of permanence and formality.

Like the building itself, the entry sequence is gracious and carefully defined. From the sidewalk, a series of five broad steps leads to a raised plaza. This change in level physically and visually separates the building from the noisy street, creating a dignified and tranquil open space in front of the entrance. The entrance portico is an impressive four-story volume that projects into the plaza and is articulated with massive fluted columns and a vast wall of contemporary stained glass. Inside, two steps rise to a long, spacious vestibule that—with state-of-the-art security discretely tucked to one side—leads to a central rotunda lobby that rises three stories.

The rotunda lobby is the first of four that pass vertically—one above the other—through the center of the building. (A fifth one is planned in a future expansion.) The rotundas are square in shape with cut-off corners. In the center of the floor and ceiling of each rotunda, glass blocks bring natural light deep into the courthouse. In addition to the formal entry, the rotundas serve as public waiting areas for the courtroom floors—levels five, six, and seven. This layout—with its central focal point—alludes to the cella or inner room of ancient Greek and Roman temples. Visually, it balances the solemnity and formality expressed on the exterior of the building with an impressive and significant interior space.

The location of the Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse and the quality of the building have made a significant contribution to revitalization efforts in Charleston. Demonstrating a commitment by the Federal government to the city center, it has become an anchor for the western edge of the downtown and has prompted nearby owners to invest and upgrade their properties. The courthouse is also a good neighbor.

The area flanking the entrance plaza is landscaped with fragrant Greenspire linden trees, flowers, benches, and lighting to provide a quiet, shaded respite from the busy street. The rotunda lobby and balcony are used for public events and are venues for exhibits of local art. In this context, the building reinforces the value of the Federal presence in the community and is a positive addition to the Charleston skyline.





## REFINED DETAILS

Quality details are essential features of great architecture. The Robert C. Byrd U.S. Courthouse combines a variety of stylistic roots—Neo-Classical, Egyptian, and Art Deco—to create its own idiosyncratic architectural and ornamental language that is inventive and well crafted. Elements range from the building's classical proportions and temple façade to the more contemporary skylight system and vibrant design of the floors.

The basic envelope of the building is virtually a cube—185 feet on each side and 170 feet tall. This form, however, is surrounded with ancillary volumes that further articulate and breakdown the mass of the building. Large L-shaped bays wrap around each corner. The bays project ten feet out and rise seven stories to a level below the cornice. They break up the façade and become the location for judges' chambers. Another ancillary volume is the entrance. The four-story portico with its simple, fluted columns protrudes beyond the bays to embrace and welcome the user. The bays and portico are balanced at the top by the prominent metal cornice, which extends out from the building the same distance as the bays.

Similar attention to detail and proportion is found in the masonry façade. Large cast stone blocks are used on the first four floors while smaller blocks are used for the upper levels. Windows at the street level have shallow arches while the windows on the courtroom floors are treated as large rectangles and squares providing a pleasing symmetrical rhythm and sense of openness to façade. Echoing the cornice, horizontal bands of dark gray cast stone accent the third, fourth, and seventh floors and help express the division and hierarchy of the building.

Art Deco motifs are found throughout the courthouse. On the exterior, chevron patterns are cast into the masonry at the top of the building and top of the entrance portico. Perforations in the metal cornice play with a variety of Deco-like geometric forms and create delicate shadows on the building façade. Just below the cornice, two rows of blocks with a diamond and chevron pattern echo the design in the cornice. On the interior, the floors of the public spaces are four colors of terrazzo—white, black, tan, and gray—in a three-dimensional chevron pattern similar to the

exterior stone work and cornice. Stainless steel doors and railings also repeat the chevron as do stainless steel and alabaster wall sconces. Amplifying the emphasis on geometrics is the pattern of muted gray-tone glass blocks inset in the center of each rotunda floor. The glass blocks, designed by West Virginia's Blenko Glass artisans, allow light to softly filter down from the top floor rotunda.

One of the most stunning details is the 2,000 square feet of stained glass on the front façade, which can be viewed to best advantage on the inside from balconies on the fifth and sixth floors. Sunlight streams through the south-facing windows bringing an array of warm-colored light into the spaces just off the rotunda area. The light-filled balconies provide warm, tranquil public seating areas outside the judges' chambers and courtrooms.





**The site, a full-block at the western end of downtown Charleston, was selected to create a prominent building as an anchor to Cass Gilbert's renowned state capitol to the east. The original design called for a perforated stainless steel dome, but the dome was eliminated and the height of the building reduced by one story for budgetary reasons. Without the dome, the profile was straightened and the building was wrapped in a projecting, perforated metal cornice to give the building a distinctive crown.**

Gary Haney  
Design Partner, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill





## ART IN ARCHITECTURE

Art has always been an important feature of great architecture. For the Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse in Charleston, West Virginia, David Wilson created an expansive stained glass artwork for the central façade.

### **Untitled (Architectural Glass)**

*Located at the Lobby Entrance and Central Façade of the Fifth and Sixth Floors*

David Wilson

Complementing the classical architectural form and details of the Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse, artist David Wilson has adapted traditional stained-glass methods and materials to produce contemporary “glass walls” for the main entry of the building. The 2,000-square-foot installation consists of three 39-foot high by 10-foot wide sections that flank the doors in the three-story entrance lobby. One large expanse, 33-feet high by 32-feet wide, is located along the fifth and sixth floor courtroom waiting area.

Intricate patterns of diverse colors, textures, and types of glass create multidimensional

surfaces. The work is composed of mouth-blown antique glass—including transparent and opal colors—clear glass bevels, cast glass pyramids, and small amounts of dichroic glass, which is glass that exhibits different colors when viewed from different directions. The transparent glass allows the viewer to see outside, while the darker colors and more opaque glass hold the surface. Warm colors and geometric motifs complement those used throughout the interior and exterior surfaces of the building. Changes in light over the course of the day and night and across the seasons produce a wide range of visual effects that catch the eye and fascinate those inside and those on the street. The glass art adds warmth and beauty to the building.

### **Art in Architecture Program**

GSA's Art in Architecture Program commissions artists, working in close consultation with project design teams, to create artwork that is appropriate to the diverse uses and architectural vocabularies of new Federal buildings. These permanent installations of contemporary art for the nation's civic buildings afford unique opportunities for exploring the integration of art and architecture, and facilitate a meaningful cultural dialogue between the American people and their government. A panel that includes the project architect, art professionals, the Federal client, and representatives of the community advises GSA in selecting the most suitable artist for each Art in Architecture commission.





**Let us dedicate this magnificent structure  
to the fervent hope that its beauty and  
majesty will ever inspire all who enter here  
to remember the higher verities, and,  
like Socrates, fearlessly and faithfully seek  
after honesty, justice, and the cleansing  
fulfillment of truth.**

Robert C. Byrd  
Senator, U.S. Congress  
At Dedication Ceremony  
May 28, 1998

## GENERAL FACTS

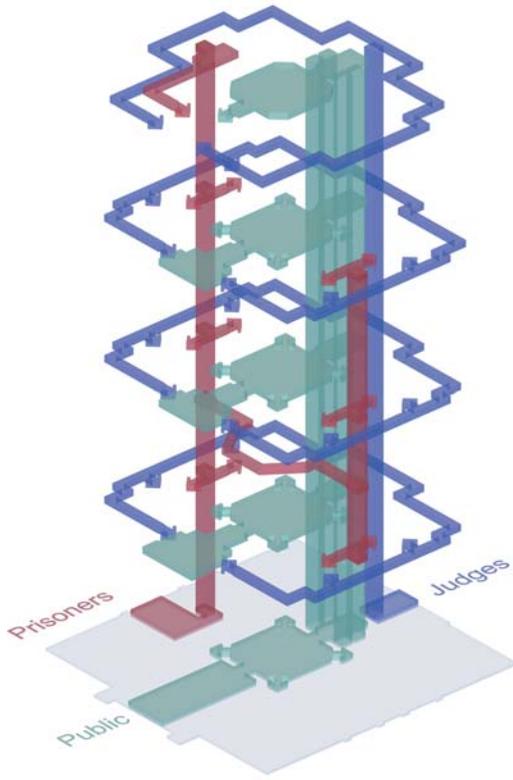
The Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse occupies a prominent city block in downtown Charleston, West Virginia. The entrance faces south on Virginia Street between Truslow Street to the west and Goshorn Street to the east. The northern edge of the block is bounded by Quarrier Street. The two-acre site, formerly occupied by Charleston National Bank, is adjacent to other government and court buildings.

The 440,000-square-foot facility rises seven stories with two levels of underground parking for 154 cars. The courthouse is the second largest building in West Virginia after the state capitol, an edifice designed by Cass Gilbert and completed in 1932 on the other side of the city. There are nine courtrooms in the building: a ceremonial courtroom for appellate judges, four District courtrooms, and four Magistrate courtrooms. There are chambers for 11 judges and administrative staff, a law library, and four floors for judicially-related functions including the U.S. Marshals and U.S. Attorney.

The ground floor of the building is primarily offices for the General Services

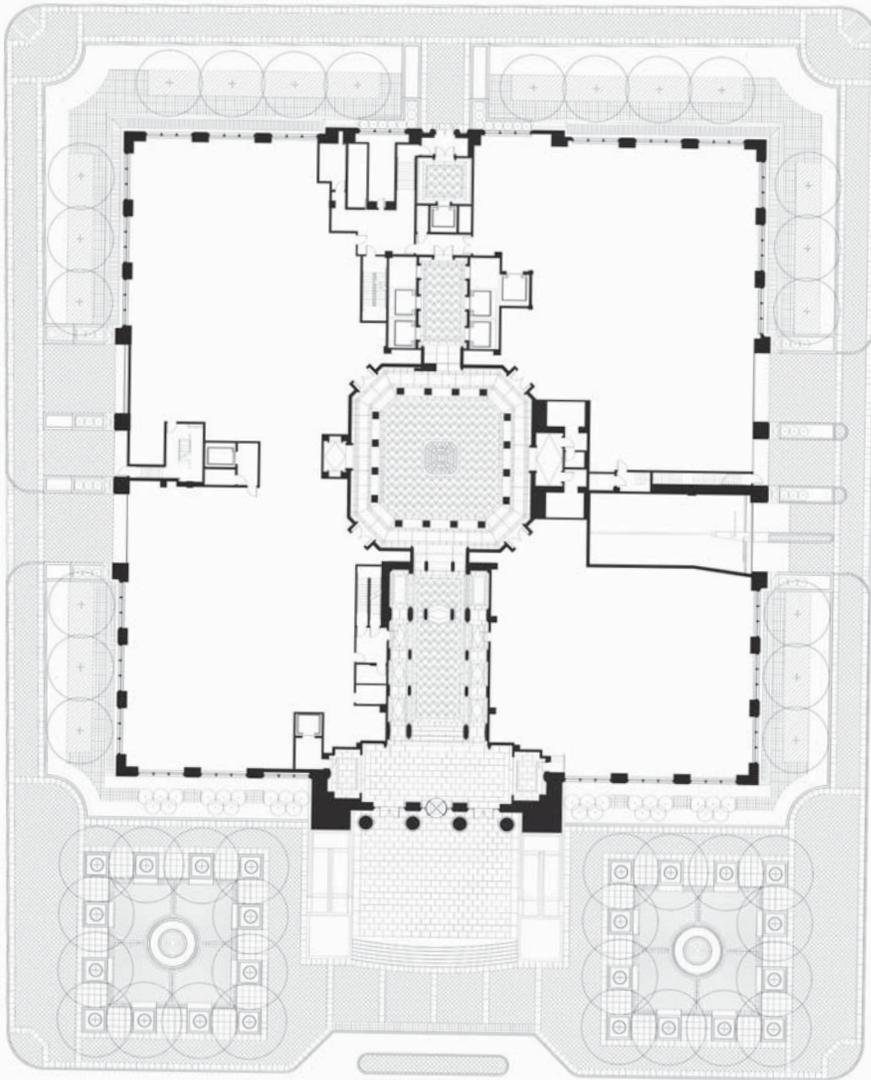
Administration, Pre-Trial, and Probation. The second, third, and fourth floors are offices for the U.S Marshals, U.S. Attorney, and other judicially-related staff. The fifth and sixth floors each contain four courtrooms grouped around a central rotunda waiting area. Judges' chambers and staff offices are in a secure area adjacent to the courtrooms and on the perimeter of the building. The seventh floor contains a ceremonial courtroom with windows overlooking the Kanawha River to the South, four appellate judges' chambers, and a law library. The majority of the mechanical and electrical systems are located on a mezzanine above the seventh floor, protecting these systems as the building is located in a 100- to 500-year flood plain. When needed, the fourth floor can be easily renovated to accommodate additional courtrooms, a rotunda lobby, and chambers—ultimately providing a total of 13 courtrooms, 15 judges' chambers, and the required staff areas.

The courtroom layout is traditional. Opposite the entrance, there is a tiered bench area for the judge and court staff. Attorneys use the broad well space in front

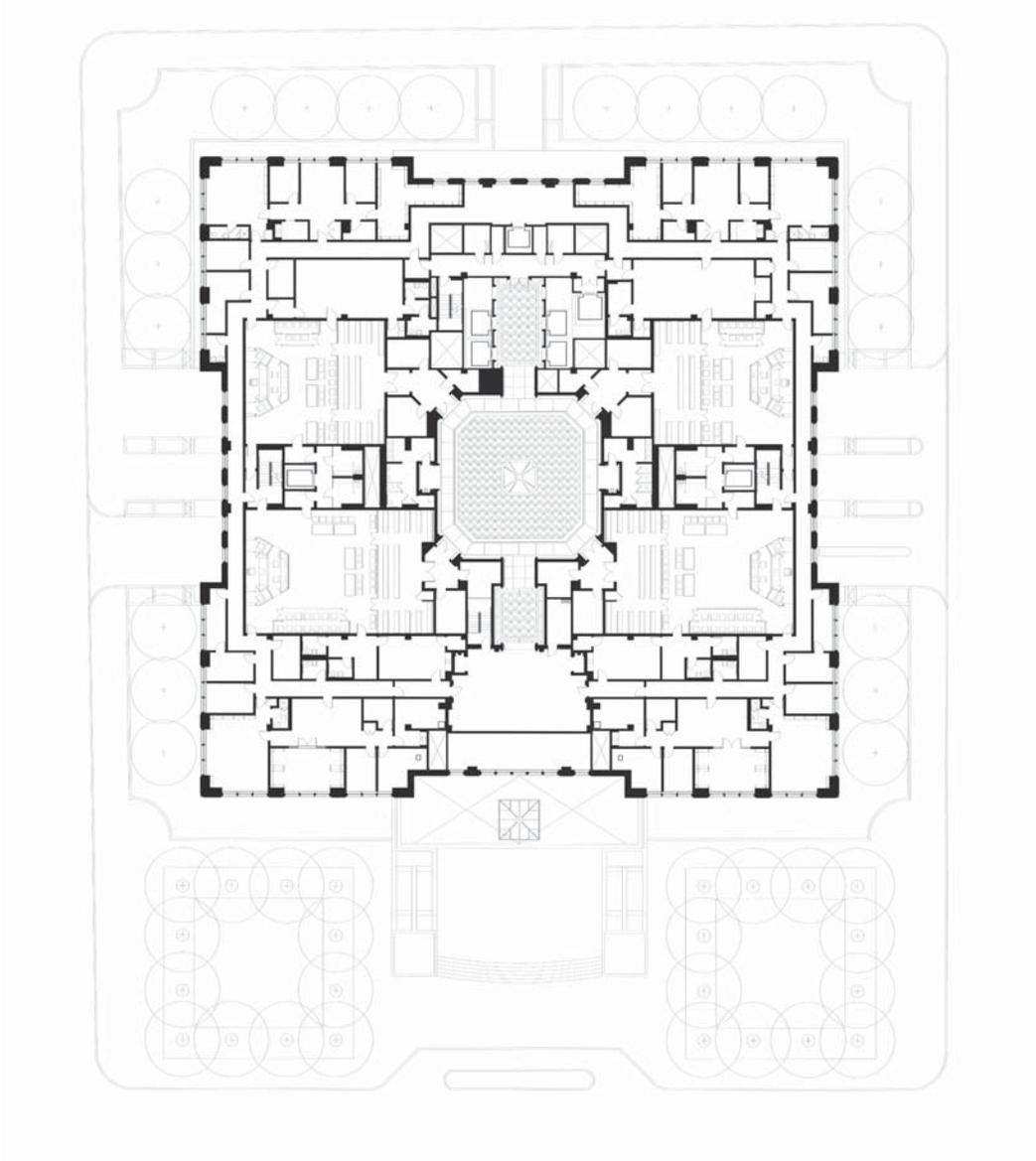


of the bench. The jury box is to the side, and visitor and witness seating is behind a railing near the entrance. The décor is elegant—rich, cherry wainscoting with fabric panels above accentuated by 18-foot ceilings with crown moldings and recessed lighting to give the chambers an imposing feeling. Muted carpeting and traditional leather chairs enhance the formality of the courtrooms.

The Robert C. Byrd U.S. Courthouse is the first courthouse designed using the 1991-revised *U.S. Courts Design Guide*. The guide requires separate and secure corridors for judges, prisoners, and the public.



**First Floor Plan**



**Typical Courtroom Floor Plan**

**Location**

A two-acre parcel of land located in downtown Charleston, bounded by Virginia and Quarrier Streets, and Truslow and Goshorn Streets.

**Size**

440,000 Gross Square Feet  
170 Feet High

Seven Floors above Grade  
(with Mezzanine above the seventh floor for mechanical and electrical systems)

Two Floors below Grade for Parking

**Time Frame**

Design Approved: August 1994  
Construction Started: July 1995  
Occupancy: April 1998  
Dedication: May 28, 1998

**Major Building Components**

U.S. Courts	192,172 Square Feet
Tenant Office Space	11,211 Square Feet
GSA/Joint Use	10,383 Square Feet
Occupiable Area	213,766 Square Feet

**Parking**

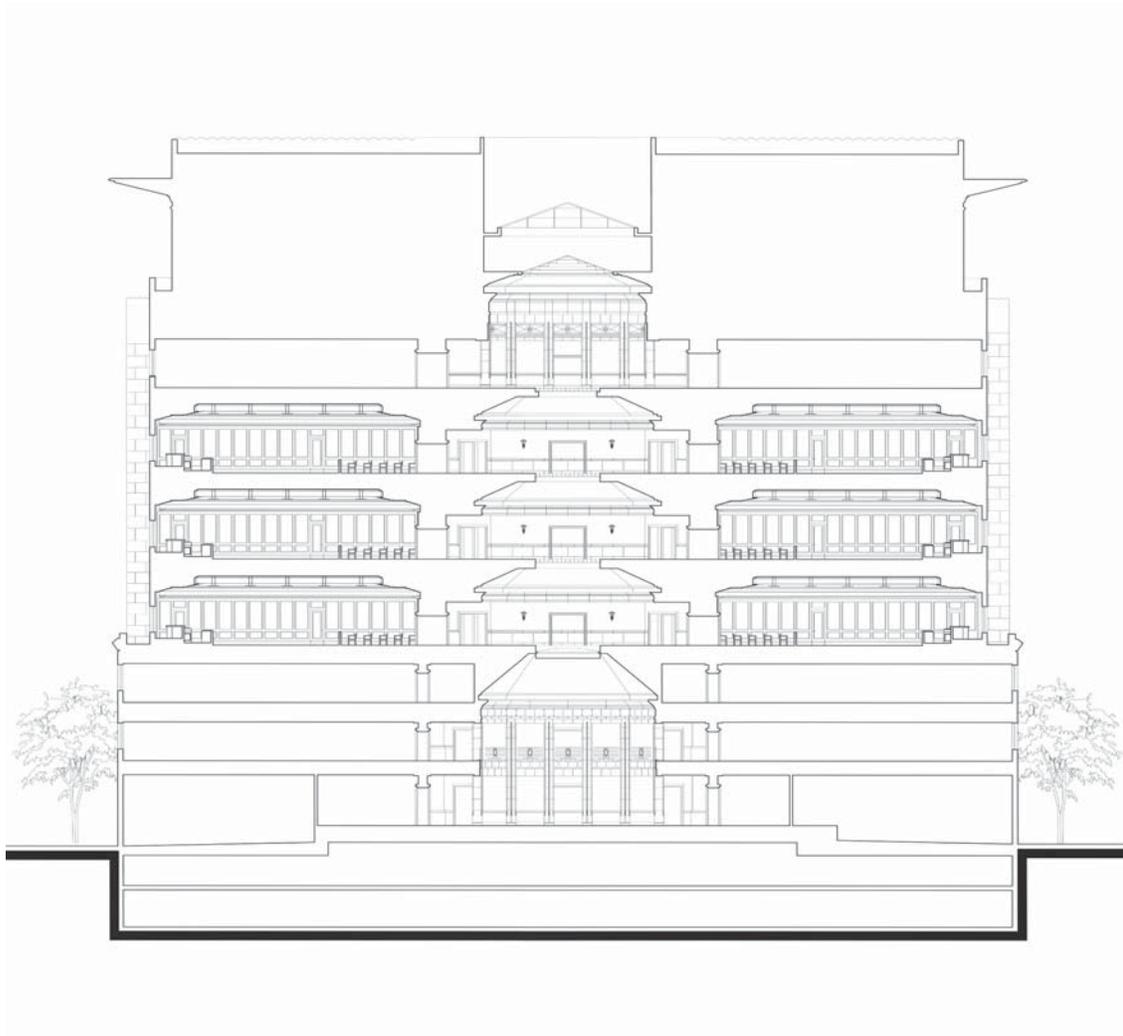
Interior	154 Spaces
Loading Dock	1 Space

**Foundation**

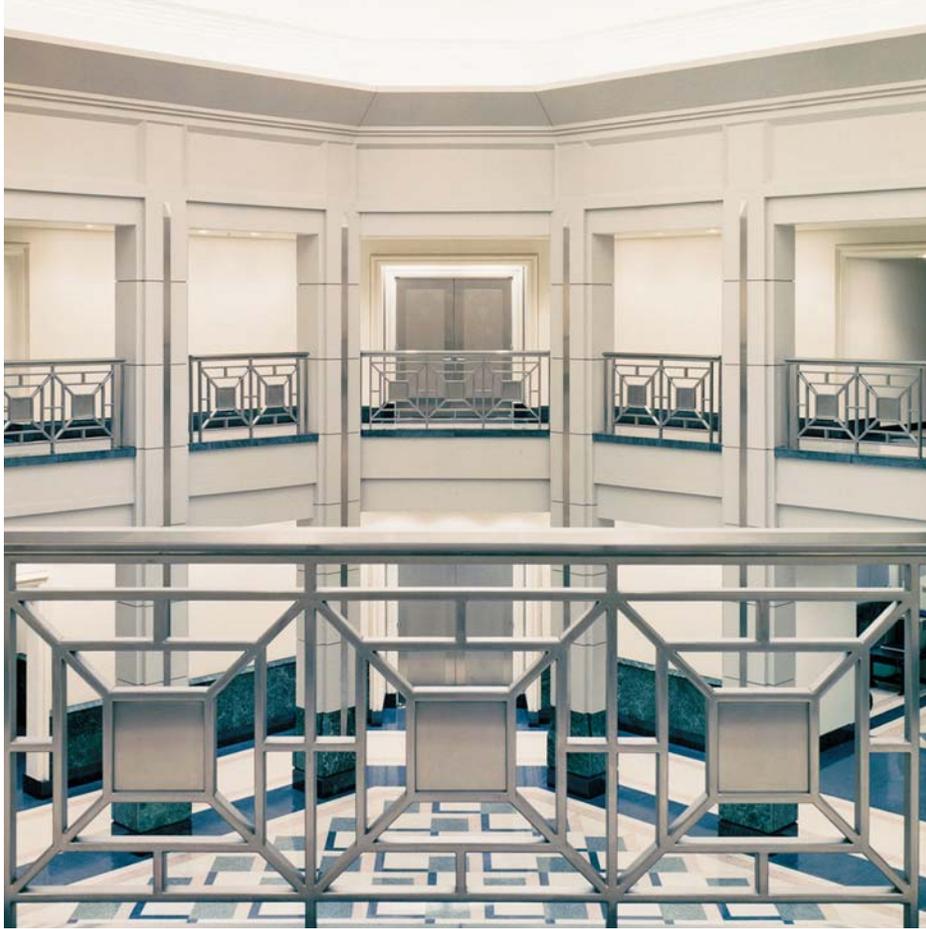
Grout piles

**Structure**

Steel frame with cast stone masonry to simulate rusticated limestone.



**Section West to East Showing Fourth Floor Expansion  
With Rotunda Lobby and Courtrooms**



**Mechanical**

Two 6,600 MBH (1,000 British Thermal Units per Hour) boilers and one swing 2,200 MBH boiler capable of dual-fuel operation.

Two 450-ton chillers and one 250-ton swing chiller; an emergency lighting and security systems generator fed from a fuel tank in the lower level; a variable air volume heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning system that includes a humidification system to provide proper comfort and humidity in the wood-finished courtrooms.

The mechanical and electrical systems, including the chillers and boilers, are fully controlled by a state-of-the-art building automation system that can be accessed locally or off-site.

**Exterior Walls**

Granite façade base with cast stone to simulate limestone blocks.

**Public Area Interior Finishes**

**Vestibule and Lobby Rotunda:** marble wainscoting and baseboards, painted wallboard, terrazzo floors inset with glass blocks in center, and stainless steel handrails.

**Courtroom Rotundas:** granite baseboards, painted wallboard, and terrazzo floors inset with glass blocks in center.

**Corridors:** granite baseboards, painted wallboard, terrazzo floors, and stainless steel doors.

**Balcony Waiting Areas:** painted wallboard, carpet, and stainless steel handrails.

**Courtrooms:** cherry wainscoting, fabric panels, and painted wallboard.

## PROFILE: ROBERT C. BYRD

Robert C. Byrd has served in the United States Senate since January 3, 1959, including six years as Senate Majority Leader (1977-1980, 1987-1988) and six years as Minority Leader (1981-1986). In 1989, he became Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, a position he held until 1995 when he became the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee. In 2000, Senator Byrd was re-elected to his eighth consecutive six-year Senate term, making him the only Senator in history to achieve that milestone.

Senator Byrd was born in 1917 in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. After the death of his mother when he was one year old, he was brought to West Virginia and raised by his aunt and uncle in various communities in the bituminous coal fields. He graduated valedictorian of his high school class in the depths of the Great Depression in the 1930s. Unable to afford college tuition, Senator Byrd took numerous menial jobs, eventually becoming a welder during World War II. After the war, he made his first run for political office and was elected to the West Virginia House of Delegates, where he served two terms

(1947-1950). He was then elected to the West Virginia Senate (1951-1952) and to three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives (1953-1958) before becoming a U.S. Senator in 1959.

In 1963, Senator Byrd earned a Juris Doctorate from American University in Washington, DC, after ten years of study in night classes, and was awarded his Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, summa cum laude, by Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia, in 1994.



## BIOGRAPHIES:

### THE ARCHITECT AND THE ARTIST

**Gary P. Haney** is a design partner at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP, New York, New York. He joined SOM in 1984 and is a recognized expert in the design of civic and government facilities. In addition to designing the Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse in Charleston, West Virginia, Haney is also responsible for the United States Courthouse in White Plains, New York.

He was the senior designer for the recently completed United States Embassy in Ottawa, Canada, and is currently working on the new headquarters for Random House Publishers in New York City, and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Alexandria, Virginia.

Haney is committed to architectural education and has taught a studio on high-rise design at the College of Architecture and Planning at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. He has been a frequent critic at Harvard University, Columbia University, North Carolina State University, and Florida A&M. His work has been recognized in numerous publications including *Architecture*, *Architectural Record*, *Metropolis*, and *The New York Times*

*Magazine*. His drawings and models have been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, the Jacob Javits Federal Building in New York City, and Miami University.

Haney received a Bachelor of Environmental Design degree from Miami University of Ohio and a Master of Architecture degree from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University.

**David Wilson** is a stained glass artist. He adapts traditional stained glass methods and materials to produce contemporary designs for today's architecture. Emphasizing the importance of visual harmony in the built environment, he aims for clear, simple forms that add to and enrich spaces. His work is less concerned with making images and more focused on enhancing particular spaces by exploring the interface of glass art and continually changing light. His goal is to weave light so that images of the glass projected by the sun create a multidimensional experience.

Wilson is a graduate of Ashville College in Harrogate, Yorkshire, England, and the fine arts program at Middlesborough College of Art in Yorkshire. He completed postgraduate studies in stained glass, mural painting, and sculpture at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London. In 1963, he moved to New York City to work for a large stained glass studio and in 1978 established his own studio.

His commissions have included works for numerous private residences, religious institutions, corporations, and civic

buildings throughout the United States. These include Kenan Flager Business School, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; First United Methodist Church, Waynesville, North Carolina; Beth David Reform Congregation, Gladwyne, Pennsylvania; St. Anne Catholic Church, Barrington, Illinois; and Le Moyne College Chapel, Syracuse, New York.

## **THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION TEAM**

### **Owner**

U.S. General Services Administration  
Regional Office: Philadelphia

### **Design Architect**

*(Including Structural Engineering  
and Interior Design)*

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP  
New York, NY

### **Artist**

David Wilson  
South New Berlin, NY

### **Construction Manager**

Day & Zimmermann  
Philadelphia, PA

### **General Contractor**

Dick Corporation, Inc.  
Pittsburgh, PA

### **Mechanical, Electrical, & Plumbing Engineers**

Syska & Hennessy  
New York, NY

### **Mechanical Contractor**

Wayne Crouse, Inc.  
Pittsburgh, PA

### **Landscape Architects**

R. J. Ankrom  
Vienna, WV





**It is natural for designers to focus on the powerful and noble symbolism of the courthouse, but it is as necessary to understand the building as it shapes the experience of those who use it daily.**

Gary Haney  
Design Partner, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill



ED STATES COURT



**U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
AND THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM**

*Public buildings are part of a nation's legacy. They are symbolic of what Government is about, not just places where public business is conducted.*

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is responsible for providing work environments and all the products and services necessary to make these environments healthy and productive for Federal employees and cost-effective for the American taxpayers. As builder for the Federal civilian Government and steward of many of our nation's most valued architectural treasures that house Federal employees, GSA is committed to preserving and adding to America's architectural and artistic legacy.

GSA established the Design Excellence Program in 1994 to change the course of public architecture in the Federal Government. Under this program, administered by the Office of the Chief Architect, GSA has engaged many of the finest architects, designers, engineers, and artists working in America today to design the future landmarks of our nation. Through collaborative partnerships, GSA is implementing the goals of the 1962 Guiding Principles for

Federal Architecture: (1) producing facilities that reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the Federal Government, emphasizing designs that embody the finest contemporary architectural thought; (2) avoiding an official style; and (3) incorporating the work of living artists in public buildings. In this effort, each building is to be both an individual expression of design excellence and part of a larger body of work representing the best that America's designers and artists can leave to later generations.

To find the best, most creative talent, the Design Excellence Program has simplified the way GSA selects architects and engineers for construction and major renovation projects and opened up opportunities for emerging talent, small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses. The Program recognizes and celebrates the creativity and diversity of the American people.

