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Accessibility Guide to the Texas State Capitol

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-PAN AMERICAN



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Accessibility Guide to the Texas State Capitol

A joint project of:

Button and Dietz, Inc.

Coalition of Texans with Disabilities

Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities

This guide was written by Betty Button and Allen Dietz
on behalf of the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities
under a contract from the Texas Rehabilitation Commission



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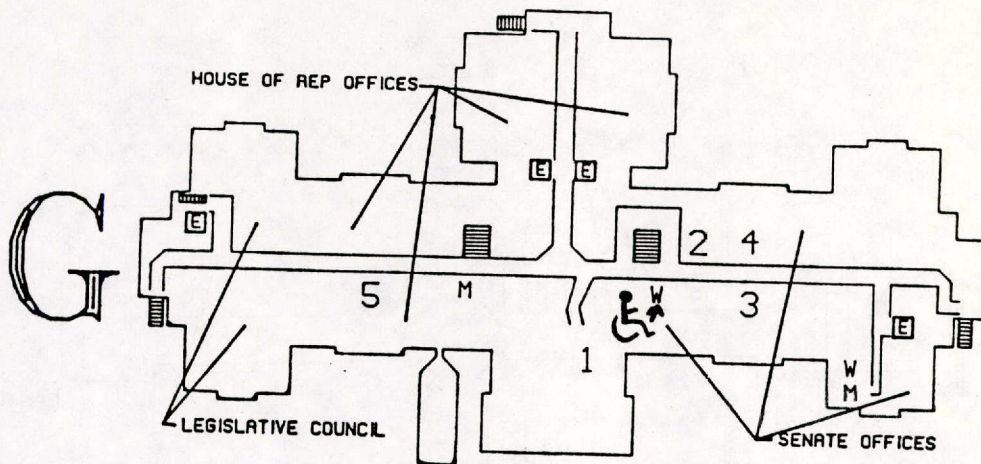
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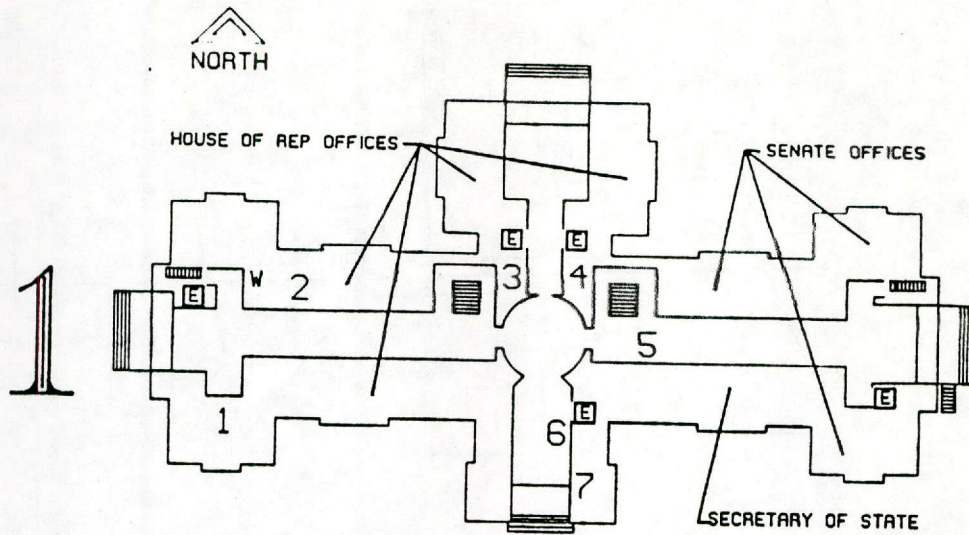
GROUND FLOOR

- 1 - Governor's Office
- 2 - Snack Bar (page 26)
- 3 - Senate Messengers
- 4 - Senate Enrolling & Engrossing
- 5 - House Special Services

KEY

-  - Public Elevators (page 7)
-  - Public Stairways
- M - Men's Restroom (page 27) *
- W - Women's Restroom (page 28) *



*The most accessible Men's Restroom is located on the Second Floor.
 The most accessible Women's Restroom is on the Ground Floor.



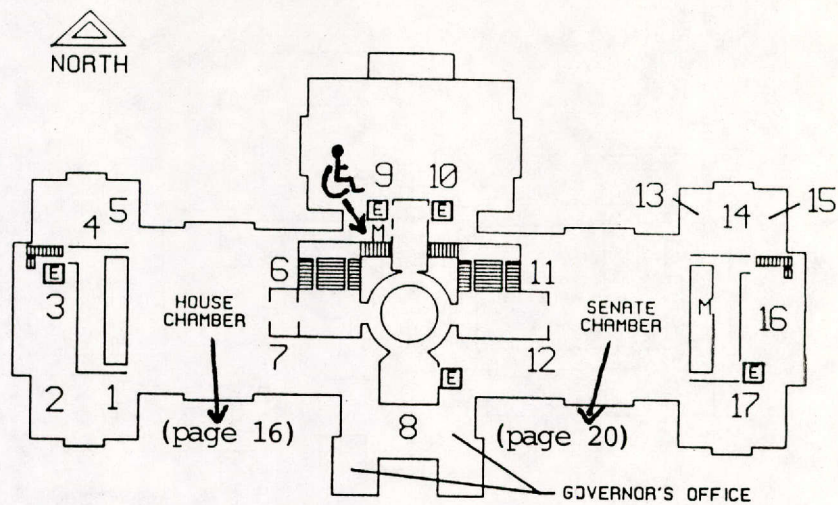
FIRST FLOOR

- 1 - Legislative Council
- 2 - Postal Service
- 3 - Capitol Doctor & First Aid
- 4 - Capitol Security Office
- 5 - Tour Guide Services (page 7)
- 6 - Tourist Information (page 7)
- 7 - Governor's Business Office

KEY

-  - Public Elevators (page 7)
-  - Public Stairways
- M - Men's Restroom (page 27)
- W - Women's Restroom (page 28)



2

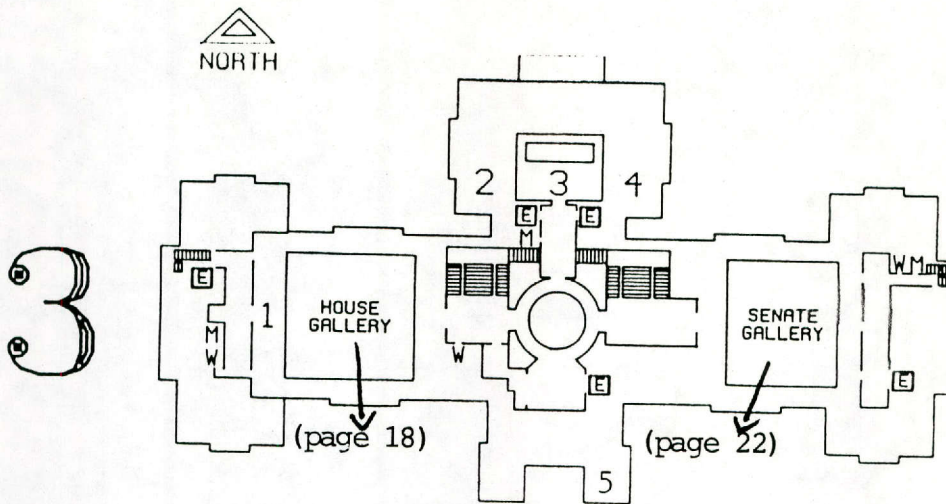


SECOND FLOOR

- 1 - House Members' Lounge
- 2 - Speaker's Office
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KEY



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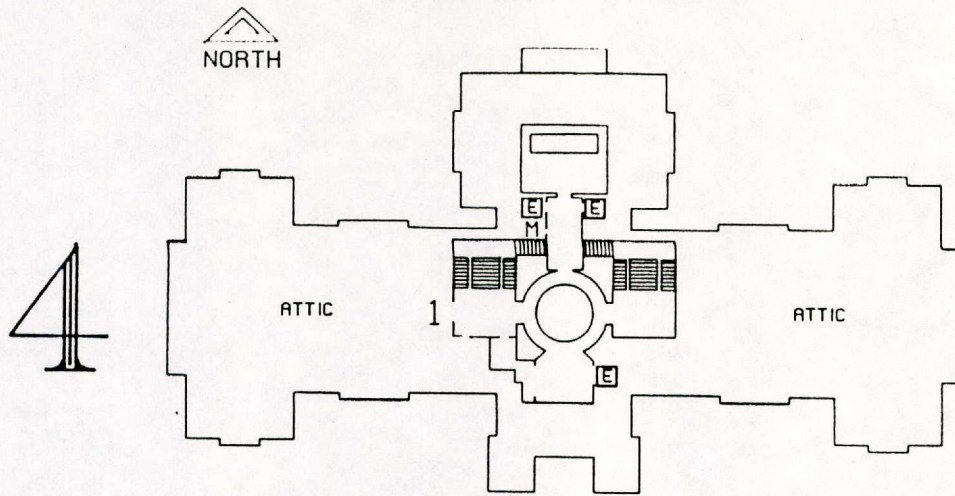


THIRD FLOOR

- 1 - House Voting Booth
- 2 - Old Supreme Court Room (page 13)
- 3 - Mini Museum
- 4 - House Appropriations Committee Room (page 14)
- 5 - Senate Finance Committee Room (page 11)

KEY

-  - Public Elevators (page 7)
-  - Public Stairways
- M - Men's Restroom (page 27)
- W - Women's Restroom (page 28)

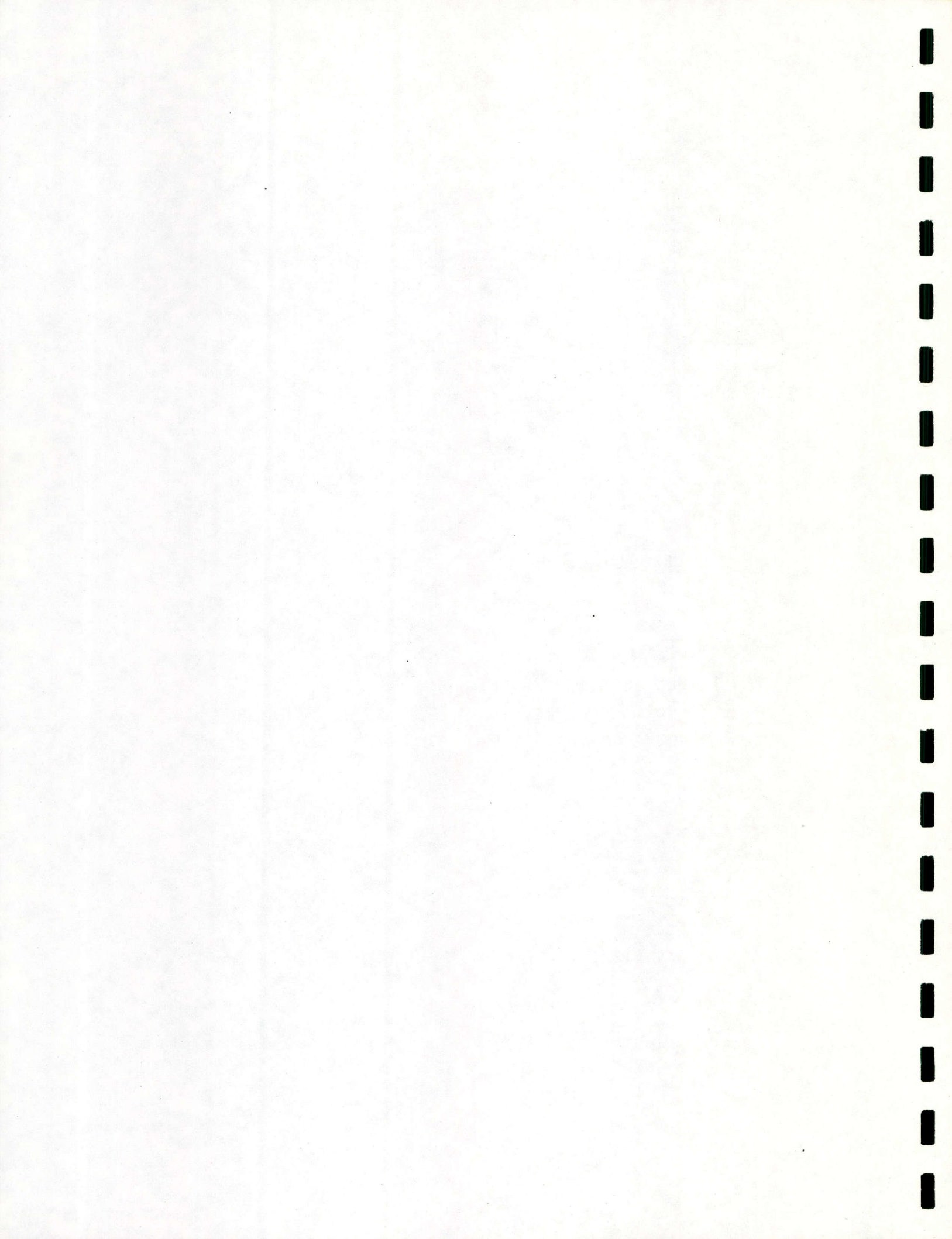


FOURTH FLOOR

1 - Chapel (page 27)

KEY

- ☐E - Public Elevators (page 7)
- ☐- Public Stairways
- M - Men's Restroom (page 27)



ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE TO THE TEXAS STATE CAPITOL

Written by Betty Button and Allen Dietz
on behalf of the
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INTRODUCTION

In the past fifteen years, individuals with disabilities have become increasingly active in legislative advocacy. Effective legislative involvement requires that advocates conduct face-to-face meetings with legislators and their staffs, participate in public hearings and other activities, and observe the processes of state government that are statutorily mandated to be open to all citizens.

This guide is written for use by individuals with disabilities who are visiting the Texas State Capitol complex. The Capitol is an old building that obviously was not designed with accessibility in mind. Awareness regarding accessibility issues was not prevalent even in the later years when the newer buildings in the area were constructed and as the Capitol was remodeled.

The guide is intended to describe the current (April, 1991) accessibility status of the Capitol building and the area that surrounds it. The authors, however, recognize that much of the information that follows actually addresses the inaccessibility of the Capitol complex. In light of recent developments such as the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the beginning of major renovation and construction around the Capitol, efforts are underway by advocates, including the authors, to effect the removal of existing barriers and to make certain no new ones are put in place.

The development of this guide is a dynamic process. We plan to revise it as new information becomes available and as conditions change, particularly with regard to the construction and renovation. We are interested in your personal experiences with accessibility issues around the Capitol and would sincerely appreciate your comments and suggestions for inclusion in future editions of the guide. A form is provided in the back of this guide for your feedback. Please return completed forms and any other comments to:

Accessibility Guide
Button and Dietz, Inc.
P.O. Box 19243
Austin, TX 78760-9243

May 3, 1991

CAPITOL GROUNDS

It is wise to do detailed advance planning and to allow extra time to travel from place to place within the Capitol complex. Accessible routes are often indirect and are not well-marked. Some of the more treacherous routes require traveling long distances in the street due to the lack of curb cuts. The construction around the Capitol has further complicated what was already a precarious situation for wheelchair users.

The horseshoe shaped drive south of the Capitol is made inaccessible just in front of the south entrance to the Capitol by some speed bumps across the driveway. The sidewalk around the outside of the Capitol from the east entrance to the south entrance is made of concrete squares. It slopes downward from the Capitol building out to the edge of the sidewalk. There are many bumps and holes in this sidewalk.

Curb Cuts

- * The curb cuts on the Capitol grounds are inadequate in number and their locations do not offer wheelchair users logical routes around the complex. There are virtually no curb cuts on the grounds west of the Capitol, and no curb cuts or ramps to offer access to the statues and grounds directly in front of the Capitol, where many public events are held.
- * The curb cut near the ramp at the only accessible Capitol entrance is extremely steep.
- * One especially laborious task for wheelchair users is traveling from the Sam Houston Building to the Capitol. One can exit the Sam Houston Building and use the courtyard sidewalks to get just east of the Capitol, but there are no curb cut to allow crossing of the drive to reach the Capitol entrance. Instead, one must travel south from the Sam Houston Building along the street in front of the State Library and Archives Building, turn west and then north along the Capitol drive around to the curb cut that leads to the ramp at the accessible east entrance. This requires traveling a distance of several blocks through an automobile traffic and parking area. The direct route between these buildings is about half a block in distance, on sidewalks through a courtyard.
- * There are no curb cuts to allow access to sidewalks near the major Capitol bus stop, on 11th Street just southwest of the Capitol.
- * Curb cuts around the Capitol do not all have textural cues to alert people with visual impairments that they are entering the street from the sidewalk.

Public Transportation

- * The Austin public transit system, Capital Metro, provides accessible bus service to the Capitol complex. For detailed information on routes, schedules, stops, and special transit services, the following telephone numbers may be helpful:

Capital Metro Main Number	512-474-1200
Capital Metro TDD Number	512-385-5872
Special Transit Service (STS) (For Riders Who Are Mobility Impaired)	
Reservations	512-478-9647
Information	512-389-7480
TDD Service	512-389-3230
Cancellations>Returns	512-385-1271
Where's My Ride Line	512-389-2767

Accessible Parking Spaces

- * Parking spaces are always scarce around the Capitol; accessible spaces are even rarer. If at all possible, have someone drive you to the Capitol and pick you up when you are ready to leave.
- * The three accessible parallel parking spaces nearest the Capitol (just across from the entrance to the ramp on the east side) have been blocked off during the renovation and construction. The three alternate spaces that have been designated to replace them are immediately east of the entrance to the ramp, on your left as you proceed up the Capitol drive. One of these spaces is reserved specifically for a House member who is mobility impaired. Accessibility symbols are painted on the street in the spaces. These are parallel parking spaces; unloading must be done on the grass on the south side or directly into the street on the north side of the spaces.
- * There are four parallel parking spaces designated for persons with disabilities on 14th Street between Congress Avenue and San Jacinto Street. One is on the north side of 14th street near Congress; another is directly across on the south side of the street. Two are located on the north side of 14th Street near San Jacinto.
- * Parking may be available in the Visitor Parking Lots north and south of the Capitol (across 15th Street and across 11th Street). These lots are frequently full, especially during legislative sessions, and there are no spaces specifically designated for use by persons with disabilities. The accessible routes from these lots to the Capitol are indirect and potentially dangerous, due to the construction site and the poor placement of curb cuts.
- * For additional information about parking or security issues around the Capitol complex, contact the Capitol Police at 512-463-3473 (voice) or 512-463-3323 (TDD), or at P.O. Box 13047, Austin, TX 78711.

Temporary Walkway from Capitol to Reagan Building

- * An above-ground walkway has been erected to allow passage between the Capitol and the Reagan Building during the renovation and construction. The flooring and walls of the walkway are made of wood. There is a ramp at the entrance to the walkway on the Capitol side, and the entrance at the Reagan Building is at ground level. This makes the west entrance to the Capitol accessible from the Reagan Building at present.
- * The (original) half of the walkway closer to the Reagan Building has no handrails and is quite narrow. If two wheelchair users meet, one must back up until reaching one of several indented alcoves to allow passage by the other. There is barely enough room for a wheelchair user to pass by an individual who is walking. The (newer) part of the walkway that is closer to the Capitol has handrails and is a bit wider, but has no alcoves.
- * The walkway is quite steep in several places.
- * The cutouts in the walls of the walkway designed to allow observation of the construction site are too high for use by individuals in wheelchairs.

Other Accessibility Issues

- * There are no tactile or auditory orientation maps of the Capitol area nor tactile or auditory descriptions of items such as sculptures and monuments on the Capitol grounds.
- * The trash receptacles outside the Capitol are too high for wheelchair users to reach; those inside the building are at a more accessible height.
- * The mailboxes in and around the Capitol are too high for many wheelchair users to reach; there is a stamp machine at accessible height on the first floor on the south side of the west wing hallway.
- * There are very few benches on the Capitol grounds and very few chairs or benches in the hallways or other open areas of the Capitol.

CAPITOL BUILDING

Most rooms in the Capitol are numbered. Rooms on floors one through four are numbered in the 100s through 400s, respectively. Basement room numbers begin with "G." Certain rooms are designated by function or by traditional title. There are no tactile indicators of room names or numbers.

Following each room or area name in this guide will be a map designation and locator number. The designations refer to the following maps at the end of the guide:

MAP G = Ground Floor Map
MAP 1 = 1st Floor Map
MAP 2 = 2nd Floor Map
MAP 3 = 3rd Floor Map
MAP 4 = 4th Floor Map

The Rotunda is the round hall in the middle of the Capitol, directly under the dome. Most directions to major features in the Capitol described in this guide are given from the Rotunda. The rail surrounding the open Rotunda on floors two, three, and four is only about waist-high, and there is no tactile warning signal that one is about to approach it.

Entrances

- * There is no signage on the Capitol grounds giving directions to accessible parking spaces and the accessible entrance.
- * The only permanent accessible entrance into the Capitol is located at the east door. A ramp from the northeast corner of the building leads to the northernmost door on the east side. This is the only door in the Capitol with an electric opener installed for use by persons with disabilities. There is a significant ridge as the ramp leads into the doorway that is difficult for some wheelchair users to cross. Individuals in wheelchairs have reported that the concrete in the ramp is frequently in need of repair, and that the automatic door closes too quickly and at times is totally inoperable. On other occasions, the door gets stuck halfway open and is impossible to move by hand. Three metal fenceposts that were set into concrete indentations at the base of the ramp have been cut off at ground level; as a result, the area at the bottom of the ramp is quite dangerous to wheelchair users and individuals with visual impairments.
- * There is a ramp at the north entrance to the Capitol. A sign specifically prohibits wheelchairs on it, but gives no explanation for the restriction. Many wheelchair users have found this sign to be offensive. The ramp, which is used to transport items into and out of the Capitol, has a tendency to separate from the building. The middle door at the north entrance is a revolving door. All access to the Capitol from the north entrance is currently blocked due to the construction.
- * At the south (front) entrance to the Capitol, there is a flight of concrete steps. This is considered the main entrance to the Capitol.
- * There is a large flight of concrete steps leading up to the west entrance. A ramp out one of the west doors goes

directly into the temporary walkway to the Reagan Building. (See also "Temporary Walkway, page 4.)

- * Prior to the construction project, the north entrance was the entrance most often used by persons arriving in taxi cabs. Now that the north entrance is temporarily blocked, it is probably best to ask the cab driver which entrance he or she prefers, if you do not need to use a ramp. You might suggest the south entrance, where there is a circular drive. Remember the east entrance is the only one that is wheelchair accessible to the Capitol driveway.

General Information

- * The floor of the Rotunda and the main hallways in the Capitol are either tile or terrazo. The terrazo floors can be slick.
- * There is no tactile or visual warning signal when one is approaching a staircase.
- * There are framed floor maps of the Capitol posted near the elevators; these are too high to be read from a wheelchair. Fire alarm levers in the Capitol, mailboxes around the Capitol, and most of the artwork in the Capitol and its accompanying descriptive information are placed too high for wheelchair users' access.
- * There are no tactile or auditory orientation maps in the Capitol nor descriptions of items in the Capitol.
- * Law enforcement personnel are located in the Capitol Police office on the first floor, just north of the Rotunda, on the east side of the hallway.
- * For general information about the architectural and physical structure of the Capitol, contact the State Preservation Board at 512-463-5495, or at P.O. Box 13286, Austin, TX 78711.
- * For information about accessibility of other state buildings, contact the Architectural Barriers Division of the State Purchasing and General Services Commission at 512-463-3211, or at P.O. Box 13047, Austin, TX 78711.
- * Soft drink, snack, and cigarette machines are located in an alcove just southwest of the Rotunda on the third floor. There is a soft drink machine just off the north end of the east hallway behind the Senate Gallery, third floor. Several other vending machines are located in the west hallway behind the House Gallery, third floor. The money slots and some of the buttons on all the vending machines are too high for some wheelchair users to reach. None of the machines has braille or raised indicators.
- * Newspaper machines are found below the staircase just west of the Rotunda on the first floor. The Legislative Reference Library has a wide selection of newspapers that can be read in the library.

Capitol Tours and Tourist Information

[MAP 1, LOCATOR 5]

- * The Tour Guides, stationed at a desk just east of the Rotunda, can give directions to rooms in the Capitol and provide general information about the Capitol building. This desk is too high for easy access by wheelchair users.
- * Tours of the Capitol are conducted on the quarter hour between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., seven days a week, except on Christmas and New Year's Day. It is advisable to check at the Tour Guide desk regarding accessibility needs before joining a tour, since the usual tour route is not barrier-free.
- * A sign language interpreter will interpret Capitol tours on request. (Please see "Sign Language Interpreters," page 35.)
- * The Capitol Tour Guides provide a special tour for individuals with visual impairments. Persons taking this "inside the ropes" tour are permitted to touch the furnishings, carpeting, statues, and other items as they are described. They also receive a braille guide to the Capitol, printed by the Texas Commission for the Blind. It is advisable to call ahead to schedule this special tour. The Tour Guides can be reached at 512-463-0063.
- * A State Tourist Information desk, sponsored by the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation, is just inside the south entrance to the Capitol. This desk is too high to be comfortably accessible to individuals in wheelchairs. Staff at this desk can provide brochures, maps, and information about tourist attractions in the state. None of these materials is available in braille or large print or on audiotape.

Elevators

[MAPS G and 1-4, LOCATOR E]

- * None of the elevators is equipped with audible signals to indicate elevator direction or floor.
- * The timers on some of the elevators in the Capitol are set to close the doors very quickly.
- * Buttons in all except the east wing elevator are too high for some wheelchair users to reach without a pointer. Buttons in the west wing elevator are unusually high.
- * The elevator in the east wing, which goes from the basement through the third floor, has a full set of braille indicators and raised letters, and the buttons are mounted at an accessible height. There are raised numbers on the door casings to indicate the floor.
- * The elevator in the south alcove goes from the first through the fourth floors. The buttons inside this elevator have both braille and raised indicators; they are too high for some wheelchair users to reach. There are no raised floor numbers on the door casings.

- * The two elevators north of the Rotunda go from the basement through the fourth floor. There are no raised floor numbers on the door casings. The buttons on both these elevators are at an accessible height. A complete set of braille and raised indicators is in the elevator on the west side of the north hallway. These indicators are to the right of the elevator door; the buttons on the left side have no braille or raised indicators. The elevator on the east side of the north hallway has braille and raised indicators only for the second and fourth floor buttons. These are to the left of the elevator doors; there are none on the right-hand set of buttons in this elevator.
- * Most wheelchair users prefer to use the "back" elevators (those in the far east and far west wings) rather than the lifts to access the House and Senate Chambers and the second and third floor east and west hallways. Use of these elevators is limited to legislators when the Senate (east wing) or House (west wing) is in session. This restriction extends to 30 minutes before convening and after adjournment of the House (west wing elevator) and 10 minutes before convening and after adjournment of the Senate (east wing elevator). These elevators provide the only access for individuals in wheelchairs to several Capitol hallways and offices. Special permission must be obtained from the House (west wing) or Senate (east wing) Sergeant at Arms' staff to use either of these elevators during the restricted periods. The Assistant Sergeant operating the elevator may be able to grant this request or may ask you to obtain permission from the Sergeant's office.

COMMITTEE MEETING ROOMS

If you plan to attend or testify at a legislative committee meeting it is wise to visit the room in advance, when it is unoccupied. This will give you an opportunity to examine the door, the floor, the seating arrangement, routes around the room, and the witness area prior to the meeting, when the room will probably be crowded.

The witness registration area and process differs from committee to committee and from room to room. To determine an individual committee's procedure, call the committee office prior to the hearing, or arrive early, go to the committee table, and ask for the committee clerk. In general, Senate committees ask witnesses to sign a card with an oath before testifying, while House committees ask witnesses to sign in and to take a verbal oath.

All committee rooms in the Capitol have wall-to-wall carpeting. Most audience seating in committee rooms is fixed, without much open floor space. The doors into these rooms have conventional doorknobs rather than handles or pushbars. It is impossible for some wheelchair users to reach these doorknobs. Some of the doors have automatic closers and are very difficult to hold open

while entering the room. None has an electric door opener. Additional details regarding individual committee room carpeting and doors are contained in the following sections.

Lieutenant Governor's Committee Room (Room 220)
[MAP 2, LOCATOR 15]

Directions

The Lieutenant Governor's Committee Room is located on the northeast corner of the hallway behind (east of) the Senate Chamber, on the second floor of the Capitol.

Layout

When you enter the Lieutenant Governor's Committee room, you will be in the rear (southwest) corner of the room. Directly to your left as you enter will be a narrow aisle going up the west side of the room. A waist-high coffee table may be set up against the wall halfway down this aisle. An aisle crosses the room about two thirds of the way up, and divides the audience seating area from the committee area. Another aisle runs down the east side of the room. There is no aisle at the back of the room. There are seven rows of seats, with eight or nine seats in each row. The committee sits at a raised U-shaped table on the north side of the room, facing south. The witness table is located at the front of the room, inside the U-shaped committee table, on the same floor level as the audience. Witnesses sit at the end of the witness table, directly in front of the first row of seats. When you sit in the witness chair, the committee will be slightly above you, to your front left, direct front, and front right. The chair of the committee will usually be directly in front of you.

Aisles and Access

- * There is a conventional doorknob, but no automatic closer on the main entry door at the back of the room.
- * This room has thick-pile carpeting.
- * A narrow aisle down the left side of audience area (facing the dais) is the only passageway to the front of the room and to the witness table. It may not be wide enough for some wheelchairs if the coffee service table is set up against the wall halfway down this aisle (as it frequently is). The aisle on the right side of the room is just wide enough for some wheelchairs to back into it. Maneuvering around the front row to this space will be difficult if the seats are occupied.
- * If people are standing in the aisle or in the doorway, several of them must be asked to move in order for a wheelchair user to enter the room or travel down the aisle.
- * From the audience and witness area there is a step up, with no ramp, to the area where committee members sit.

Seating

- * Audience chairs are stationary. There may be space for one or two wheelchairs on left side of the room (facing the dais) in front.
- * The best place for a person with a dog guide to sit is in an aisle seat on the east side of the room (the side of the room opposite the door).

Testimony

- * Witnesses testify from a table in front of the committee. The table may be too low for some wheelchair users to pull directly up to it. A wheelchair user would have to displace several people on the front row in order to gain access to the witness table. The usual witness chair must be moved to accommodate a wheelchair. Underneath the table just in front of the witness chair, there is a hole for the microphone cable, surrounded by a large metal plate. This could be problematic for wheelchair users and for persons using canes.

Sergeant's Committee Room (Room 215) [MAP 2, LOCATOR 12]

Directions

The Sergeant's Committee Room is on the south side of the foyer outside the Senate Chamber, due east of the Rotunda on the second floor of the Capitol. This room is just to the right as you stand at the main entrance to the Senate Chamber.

Layout

The Sergeant's Committee Room is one of the smallest committee rooms in the Capitol. As you enter the room, you will be directly behind the last row of seats. There are four rows of seats, with six seats per row. You must turn left or right as you enter the room and go up an aisle on either side to get to the front of the room. Committee members sit at a square table at the front of the room. The committee table is on a raised platform about six inches above the level of the rest of the room. The witness sits at the committee table, in the center of the side directly in front of the first row of seats. The chair of the committee usually sits in the center of the opposite side of the table, facing the audience.

Aisles and Access

- * The door into this room has a conventional doorknob, is heavy, and does not open back all the way. It does not have

an automatic door closer. The door blocks the aisle to the right of the stationary audience seating when it is open.

Seating

- * There is an area large enough for a wheelchair behind the back row of stationary seats. A wheelchair anywhere in this room will block an aisle.
- * Since there is ample room between the rows of seats in this room, the best area for a person with a dog guide to sit would be in the middle of row two, three, or four.

Testimony

- * Witnesses testify from one side of the committee table, which is on a raised platform with no ramp. Since there is not enough room for a wheelchair between the front row of stationary seating and the raised platform, wheelchair users wishing to testify must sit in the aisle to one side of the table below the platform. Because the microphone used by witnesses at the committee table is stationary, it is inaccessible to a witness testifying from a wheelchair.

Senate Reception Committee Room (Room 214) [MAP 2, LOCATOR 11]

Directions

The Senate Reception Committee Room is on the north side of the foyer outside the Senate Chamber, due east of the Rotunda on the second floor of the Capitol. This room is just to the left as you stand at the main entrance to the Senate Chamber.

This room is a mirror-image of the Sergeant's Committee Room discussed in the previous section. The degree of inaccessibility is identical.

Senate Finance Committee Room (Room 301) [MAP 3, LOCATOR 5]

Senate Finance Committee meetings usually draw a large crowd. There is a waiting area in the foyer outside the committee room, with lots of open space and several benches. Senate Finance Committee proceedings are broadcast over a speaker into this area, although poor acoustics in the foyer make it often difficult to hear and understand. This is particularly true for persons with hearing impairments.

Directions

The Senate Finance Committee Room is located in the southeast corner of the alcove that is due south of the Rotunda on the third floor of the Capitol.

Layout

When you enter the Senate Finance Committee room, the seating will be on your left. There are three rows of seats, with eleven seats per row. As you enter the room, you'll be in front of the front row of seats. The committee seating will be on your right on a raised, U-shaped dais. There is no ramp access to the dais.

There is a witness table and witness seating on your right, halfway into the room, in front of the first row of seats, facing the middle of the U-shaped dais. As you sit at the witness table, the committee will be slightly above you, to your front left, immediate front, and front right. The committee chair usually sits in the center of the U-shaped dais, directly in front of the witness.

Aisles and Access

- * The door into this room is quite heavy and has an automatic closer.
- * There is thick-pile carpeting in this room.

Seating

- * Seating for the audience is stationary. There is limited space for a maximum of two or three wheelchairs in front of these seats on the far side of room by the windows, but a wheelchair will block the aisle. There is no room behind the back row of audience seating.
- * The best seats if you are using a dog guide are on the far side (away from the door) in the front row, or on either end of the second or third row.

Testimony

- * Witnesses testify from a table in front of the committee. The table is too low for a wheelchair user to pull directly up to it. He or she must sit to the right or left of the witness table and then lean in toward the table to use the microphone.

Senate Chamber

For information on committee hearings held in the Senate Chamber, please see "Senate Chamber," in the section entitled "Legislative Chambers and Galleries," page 20.

Old Supreme Court Room (Room 314)

[MAP 3, LOCATOR 2]

Directions

The Old Supreme Court Room is in the northwest corner of an alcove directly north of the Rotunda on the third floor of the Capitol. There is a large historic display area in the middle of this alcove behind a rail and a glass panel. It is of accessible height for wheelchair users. The descriptive plaques are in regular print format only. No descriptive information or tactile experiences are offered for persons with visual impairments.

Layout

The Old Supreme Court Room has two side-by-side sections of fixed seats facing south, toward the front of the room. In each of the two sections, there are eight rows of eight seats. There is a large floor-to-ceiling column next to the center aisle seat in the fourth row on the east side of the room. There is a narrow aisle on each side of the room, and a wider aisle up the middle of the room. One door, in the northwest corner of the alcove, enters the east side of the room at the back. This is the primary entrance when a committee meeting is in progress. The other door, in the southwest corner of the alcove, enters the east side of the room at the front. When you enter the room from the back door, you will be facing the end of the second to last row of seats. An aisle leading to the front of the room will be to your immediate left. (This aisle is too narrow to accommodate wheelchairs.) The committee sits in two rows of raised, banked seats along the west wall facing north. Witnesses testify from a podium with a microphone at the front of the room, in front of the first row of seats, facing the committee. When you are at the podium, the committee will be directly in front of and slightly above you, in two tiered rows. The committee chair usually sits in the center of the top tier.

Aisles and Access

- * There is very limited space for wheelchairs just inside the back door. Some space also is available in front of the stationary audience seating. The aisle just inside the back door is not wide enough to permit wheelchair access to the front of the room. A wheelchair user would need to get someone inside the room to open the front door to get to the open area in front of the stationary seats. This door usually is kept locked. Members of the public are intended to use the back door, to minimize disruption of meetings in progress.
- * Doors have conventional doorknobs, but no automatic door closers.
- * There is no ramp to either level of the two-tiered committee dais.

Seating

- * The best seats for a person with a dog guide are in the front row, or in any seat along the center aisle.

Testimony

- * Witnesses usually testify at a podium that is accessible only to persons who are able to stand. The microphone is removable and can be held by hand.

House Appropriations Committee Room (Room 309) [MAP 3, LOCATOR 4]

House Appropriations Committee meetings are usually crowded. The door may be blocked by standing audience members. In the large foyer between the House Appropriations Committee Room and the Old Supreme Court Room there are a few chairs and library tables against the wall. Some partitions in this foyer just outside and to the right of the door into the House Appropriations Committee Room create a small "overflow" room with a seating area used primarily by legislative staff, but in which the public is also permitted.

Directions

The entrance to the House Appropriations Committee Room is in the middle of the east wall of an alcove directly north of the Rotunda on the third floor of the Capitol. There is a large historic display area in the middle of this alcove behind a rail and a glass panel. It is of accessible height for wheelchair users. The descriptive plaques are in regular print format only. No descriptive information or tactile experiences are offered for persons with visual impairments.

Layout

When you enter the House Appropriations Committee Room, you will be entering the back left (northwest) corner of the room. There are four rows of fixed seats, with seven seats per row, to your right as you enter the room. A pillar partially obstructs the view from two seats on the left side of the front row. There are also six moveable chairs to your immediate left as you enter the room, and several more moveable chairs on the far right (south) side of the room. The committee will be sitting at a raised, U-shaped table on the far (east) side of the room, facing you. The committee chair usually sits in the center of the U-shaped dais, directly in front of the witness. The witness table or podium will be in front of the first row of seats, facing the committee. As you sit at the witness table, or stand at the podium, the committee will be slightly above you, to your front left, immediate front, and front right.

Aisles and Access

- * The public entrance door into this room does not have an automatic closer.
- * There is no ramp to the raised committee dais.

Seating

- * Because the audience chairs in the two side sections are moveable, the arrangement of these seats and the width of the aisles may not be consistent. There is no room for wheelchairs behind the back row of seating. Most wheelchair users sit in the area just to the left of the door upon entering the room. Availability of space on either side of the stationary seats depends upon the current arrangement of the moveable chairs.
- * The best place for a person using a dog guide to sit is in either of the areas containing moveable seats, or on the south end of the fixed rows of seats (farthest from the door.)

Testimony

- * Witnesses testify at a standing podium or seated at a table facing the committee. The podium has a removable microphone. The table is high enough to permit access by wheelchair users. When the room is particularly crowded, the committee sometimes asks individuals in wheelchairs to testify from the audience area using a hand-held microphone, rather than approach the podium.

Speaker's Committee Room (Room 236) [MAP 2, LOCATOR 6]

In addition to committee meetings, this room is frequently used for press conferences.

Directions

The Speaker's Committee Room is off the House Chamber foyer, west of the Rotunda on the second floor of the Capitol. If you turn right (north) just before the entrance to the House Chamber, you'll enter the Speaker's Committee Room.

Layout

As you enter the Speaker's Committee Room, you will be facing the end of the last row of seats, and the front of the room will be on your left. There are two rows of moveable seats, with nine or ten seats per row, facing west. This room is frequently used for press conferences, and there are often a number of tripods set up behind the last row of seats and in other places around the room.

Be careful not to trip over the legs of these tripods or other media equipment. The committee (or the people holding the press conference) sit at an L-shaped table that runs along the west and north sides of the room.

Aisles and Access

- * The committee table is not on a raised platform. Table legs on both ends and a set of steps leading into the House Chamber on one end prevent wheelchair users from sitting behind the table. An individual in a wheelchair serving on a committee or press conference panel in this room must sit at one end of the L-shaped table rather than behind it with the other members.
- * There is no automatic closer on the door into this room.
- * Audience chairs are moveable, but are usually arranged so there is ample room for several wheelchairs behind them as well as just inside the door.

Seating

- * There is ample room between the rows of seats. The best place for a person using a dog guide to sit is at the far (north) end of either row.

Testimony

- * Witnesses usually testify from a standing podium to one side of the committee dais; its microphone is removable and can be hand-held; access to the witness podium from the audience area is generally free of obstacles.

LEGISLATIVE CHAMBERS AND GALLERIES

House of Representatives Chamber

[MAP 2]

Members of the public are not allowed on the House floor when the House of Representatives is in session. The House Chamber is open to the public at all other times, including during committee meetings that may be held around members' desks. Depending upon where the desk is located, it may be difficult or impossible for a wheelchair user to reach the meeting site.

Just to the right of the door into the House Chamber foyer, there is a large board where House Committee meetings and public hearings are posted. This information is posted in regular print format only.

Directions

The House Chamber is located due west of the Rotunda on the second floor of the Capitol.

Layout

The House Chamber is a large rectangular room. The Speaker's rostrum, the podium holding the front microphone, the electronic voting display boards, and the electronic board describing the action being considered by the House will be directly in front of you on the far west side of the room, facing east, as you enter the Chamber from the Rotunda side. Most House members sit at double desks in the House Chamber in rows facing west, toward the Speaker's rostrum. Near the front of the Chamber, several rows of double desks to the left and right of the rostrum face inward, toward the rostrum. The podium holding the back microphone is at the east end of the Chamber facing west, directly in front of you as you enter the Chamber from the Rotunda side. Doors in the northwest and southwest corners of the House Chamber lead to the Speaker's offices and reception area off the west hallway behind the Chamber.

There is a wide aisle around the perimeter of the House members' desk area, except on the west side of the Chamber where the Speaker's rostrum is located. Another wide aisle goes directly up the middle of the Chamber. A velvet rope usually blocks access to the middle aisle when the House is not in session, and a brass rail encircles the Representatives' desk area. If you are going to a committee meeting at a House member's desk, or are going to talk with a Representative at his or her desk on the floor when the House is not in session, the velvet rope blocking the middle aisle will usually be down. Representatives' desks are numbered and are extremely close together, so it is best to ask a House staff person for directions once you are in the House Chamber.

Aisles and Access

- * There is a wheelchair lift at the main entrance to the House Chamber, just west of the Rotunda on the second floor. This lift has a maximum total weight limit of 250 pounds. In order to use it, one must get assistance from the House Sergeant at Arms' Office (located just to the left of the lift). Once the lift has been unlocked by a House staff member, the switch that controls its movement must be activated by the person riding the lift. This switch is rather small and may be difficult for some individuals with mobility impairments to operate.
- * The floor of the House Chamber is on one level, with the exception of the Speaker's rostrum and the podium directly in front of it. There is no ramp to these areas, which are accessible only by climbing one or more steps. There are no handrails along these steps.
- * First-hand reports indicate that wheelchairs can be relatively easily maneuvered on the House Chamber carpeting.
- * The entire floor of the House Chamber slopes slightly upward from the main entrance to the Speaker's rostrum.

- * Carpeted corridors in the northwest and southwest corners of the chamber lead to a hallway behind the chamber containing the offices of the Speaker of the House and the Speaker Pro Tem. These corridors are significantly inclined, and there are rather large ridges in the floor between the hall and the corridors. This back hallway is also accessible to wheelchair users by taking the elevator at the far west end of the Capitol. (See also "Elevators," page 7.)

Seating

- * There are some chairs along the north and south walls of the House Chamber.

House of Representatives Gallery

[MAP 3]

The House Gallery is the only place where the general public can observe the House of Representatives in session. The temperature in the House Gallery is almost always very cold.

Directions

The House Gallery is located due west of the Rotunda on the third floor of the Capitol.

Layout

The House Gallery is a rectangular shaped balcony surrounding the floor of the House. As you enter the House Gallery from the third level of the Rotunda, you are entering the top level at the back of the Gallery. An aisle runs all the way around the top level except in the middle of the west side where it is blocked by the House electronic voting system control booth. Seating in the gallery is banked down from this top aisle. Be careful as you walk through the Gallery. There are frequent level changes in the House Gallery, and the steps between rows of seats are very steep. Doors in the northwest and southwest corners of the House Gallery lead to offices off the hallway behind the Gallery.

The Speaker's rostrum, the podium holding the front microphone, the electronic voting display boards, and the board describing the action the House is considering will be directly in front of and below you in the House Chamber on the far west side of the room, facing east, toward you. Most House members sit at double desks in the House Chamber in rows facing west, toward the Speaker's rostrum. Near the front of the Chamber, several rows of desks to the left and right of the rostrum face inward, toward the rostrum. The podium holding the back microphone is at the east end of the Chamber, directly below and in front of the seating on the west side of the gallery.

Aisles and Access

- * The main door into the House Gallery, just west of the Rotunda, is quite narrow and heavy; it has a conventional doorknob.
- * The ramp to this entrance is very steep and short and has no handrail. Caution is strongly urged for wheelchair users who decide to attempt this ramp without assistance. A significant amount of momentum is required to mount the ramp; then one must be prepared to stop quickly upon entering the Gallery; almost immediately one is confronted with several steps down. There is no tactile or visual warning signal that one is approaching these steps.
- * There is a small area of wood flooring just inside the door, but the remainder of the Gallery is carpeted. Around the wood flooring is a raised border that can be difficult to negotiate in a wheelchair.
- * There are two additional entrances to the House Gallery off the west hall opposite the Rotunda entrance. These can be reached by taking the elevator on the far west wing up to the third floor. (See also "Elevators," page 7.) The doors, which have conventional doorknobs, are wider than the individual doors at the main entrance and provide level access to the Gallery. The available space for wheelchairs once inside, however, is limited to a relatively small area in each corner and a small space behind the back row of permanent seating on one side. Because this area is located above and behind the podium and rostrum, the view is limited to the back part of the House Floor.

Seating

- * The best seating for partially sighted persons is in the front row of seats on the north or south side of the Gallery, toward the west end near the Speaker's rostrum. Turn left or right as you enter the Gallery and follow the aisle around to the northwest or southwest area of the Gallery.
- * The best seating for persons with dog guides is on the front row on the north or south side of the Gallery. Turn left or right upon entering the Gallery and follow the aisle around to the north or south side of the Gallery. You will be descending several steep steps as you proceed to the front row.
- * Once inside the Gallery door, there is space sufficient for several wheelchairs to the right and to the left behind the back row of seats. The view of the House floor from this vantage point is limited, especially if there are people in the back row of stationary seating. Access to the other three sides of the square Gallery requires descending steep steps, since all the rows of seats are banked. Turning a wheelchair around to exit the Gallery through the main entrance can be problematic due to the limited space behind

the last row of seats, particularly if the Gallery is crowded.

Senate Chamber

[MAP 2]

Members of the public may not go onto the Senate floor when the Senate is in session. Otherwise, the Chamber is open to the public. Many committee meetings and public hearings are conducted in the Senate Chamber.

Notices of Senate Committee meetings and public hearings are posted on a large board just to the left of the door into the Senate Chamber foyer. There is another posting board just outside and to the right of the Lieutenant Governor's Committee Room. In both locations, the information is posted in regular, print format only.

Directions

The Senate Chamber is located due west of the Rotunda on the second floor of the Capitol.

Layout

The Senate Chamber is a large square-shaped room. The rostrum where the Lieutenant Governor presides and the podium where the Secretary of the Senate stands will be directly in front of you in the Senate Chamber on the far east side of the room, facing west, toward you. Senators sit at individual desks on the Senate floor in rows facing east, toward the Lieutenant Governor's rostrum. Each Senator has a microphone at his or her desk and speaks standing at the desk. Doors in the northeast and southeast corners of the Senate Chamber lead to the Lieutenant Governor's office, the Lieutenant Governor's Reception Room and Committee Room, and the Secretary of the Senate's office in the east hallway behind the Chamber.

The Senate does not use an electronic voting system. The Lieutenant Governor may call for a voice vote or may ask the Secretary of the Senate to call the roll. During record votes, as the roll is called, Senators state their votes aloud or hold up one finger for "aye" or two fingers for "no." The Lieutenant Governor announces the result of the voice or record vote. Small laminated placards inserted into slots on the front of the podium of the Secretary of the Senate announce the action the Senate is currently considering. These are difficult to see from the Gallery.

A wide aisle surrounds the Senators' desk area, except on the east side where the Lieutenant Governor's rostrum is located. Another wide aisle goes directly up the middle of the Chamber. A brass rail separates the perimeter from the Senate floor. When

the Senate is not in session, velvet ropes usually block access to the middle aisle and the side aisles that lead onto the floor. Moveable brass standards with heavy solid bases hold the velvet ropes. If you are going to a committee meeting in the Senate Chamber, or are going to talk with a Senator at his or her desk on the floor after adjournment, the velvet ropes will usually be down. When the Senate is not in session, an Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms sits at a desk just inside the Senate Chamber, to the right of the middle aisle as you enter from the Rotunda.

Aisles and Access

- * There is a wheelchair lift at the main entrance to the Senate Chamber, just east of the Rotunda. It has a maximum weight limit of 400 pounds; its dimensions are too small to accommodate tri-wheelers. To use it, assistance must be requested from one of two sources: a) the Assistant Sergeant at Arms who is stationed at a table several feet inside the Chamber; or b) the staff person at the Tour Guide desk on the first floor (east side, just off the Rotunda). Reported plans to install a direct-line telephone beside the lift to provide quick access to Tour Guide personnel have not yet been implemented. On numerous occasions, this lift has not been in working order.
- * Off the hall at the opposite (east) end of the Chamber, there are two corridors leading into the Chamber. The doors into these corridors, which have conventional doorknobs, are usually open except when the Senate is in session. These back corridors, which are significantly inclined and thickly carpeted, can be reached by taking the elevator at the far east end of the Capitol. (See also "Elevators," page 7.)
- * The entire floor of the Senate Chamber slopes upward from the main entrance toward the rostrum.
- * The floor of the Senate Chamber is on a single level, with the exception of the podium where the Lieutenant Governor presides. Several steps lead up to this podium. There is no ramp.
- * First-hand reports indicate that the carpeting in the Senate Chamber permits wheelchairs to be maneuvered fairly easily.

Seating

- * If you are attending a Senate committee meeting or public hearing in the Senate Chamber, you may sit inside the brass rail at a Senator's desk. There are also chairs along the north and south walls of the Senate Chamber and along the brass rail behind the last row of Senator's desks.

Testimony

- * For committee meetings and public hearings in the Senate Chamber, a large table is set up lengthwise down the middle aisle. The chair of the committee sits at the east end of the table; committee members sit on the north and south

sides. Witnesses testify sitting at the west end of the table. The witness chair can be moved to enable a wheelchair user to roll directly up to the table. The microphones used at this table are moveable.

Senate Gallery

[MAP 3]

Directions

The Senate Gallery is located due east of the Rotunda on the third floor of the Capitol.

Layout

The Senate Gallery is a square shaped balcony surrounding the floor of the Senate. As you enter the Senate Gallery from the third level of the Rotunda, you are entering the top level at the back of the gallery. An aisle runs all the way around the top level. Seating in the gallery is banked down from this top aisle. Be careful as you walk through the Gallery. There are frequent level changes in the Senate Gallery, and the steps between rows of seats are very steep. Doors in the northeast and southeast corners of the Senate Gallery lead to offices off the hallway behind the Gallery.

The rostrum where the Lieutenant Governor presides and the podium where the Secretary of the Senate stands will be directly in front of and below you on the far east side of the Chamber, facing west, toward you. Senators sit at individual desks on the Senate floor in rows facing east, towards the Lieutenant Governor's rostrum. Each Senator has a microphone at his or her desk and speaks standing at the desk.

Aisles and Access

- * The main entrance into the Senate Gallery is through a set of double doors, just east of the Rotunda on the third floor. One of the doors has a conventional doorknob; the ramp leads to the opposite door, however. This means that assistance must be obtained to open both doors if the ramp is to be used. Individuals in wheelchairs have reported that this ramp is simply too dangerous to use. It is extremely steep and has no handrail. Just inside the door, there is a sudden step down into the aisle between several banked rows of permanent seats. Be prepared to stop abruptly upon entering the Gallery. There is no tactile or visual warning signal that one is approaching steep steps.
- * It is difficult to maneuver a wheelchair on the thick-pile carpeting in the Senate Gallery.
- * There are two doors into the Gallery off the far east hallway, but they are inaccessible to wheelchair users due to steps and no ramp.

Seating

- * The best seating for partially sighted persons is in the front row of seats on the north or south side of the Gallery, toward the east end near the Lieutenant Governor's rostrum. Turn left or right as you enter the Gallery and follow the aisle around to the northeast or southeast area of the Gallery.
- * The best seating for persons with dog guides is on the front row on the north or south side of the Gallery. Turn left or right upon entering the Gallery and follow the aisle around to either side. The steps leading down to the front row are quite steep.
- * Space for wheelchairs is quite limited. The area behind the back row of stationary seating is narrow; the only open space is in the north and south corners. Turning a wheelchair around in this area presents serious challenges. The remaining three sides of the Gallery can be reached only by steps. All permanent seating is tiered.

OTHER ROOMS AND OFFICES

Office of the Secretary of the Senate (Room 218)
[MAP 2, LOCATOR 14]

The office of the Secretary of the Senate is located at the north end of the hallway behind the Senate Chamber on the second floor of the Capitol.

- * There are two desks outside the main office of the Secretary of the Senate, occupied by her Administrative Assistant and the Senate Committee Coordinator. It is not necessary to go through a door to interact with them, since they are located just at the north end of the east hallway that runs behind the Senate Chamber. These staff persons sit behind counters that are too high for comfortable wheelchair access.
- * Lists of Senate members and committees are available from this office, in regular print format only. Copies of these lists are usually on low tables on either side of the passageway into the Secretary of the Senate's office.
- * The floor of this hallway is tile.

Office of the Chief Clerk of the House (Room 238)
[MAP 2, LOCATOR 5]

The office of the Chief Clerk of the House is in the northwest corner of the House Chamber.

- * The Chief Clerk's Office is entered from the northwest corner of the House Chamber, and is therefore not open to the public when the House is in session.

- * From the Chamber, there are two steps down into the Chief Clerk's Office, with no ramp. This office is a large open area, and it is possible to talk from the doorway with staff persons to request information or materials.
- * Lists of House members and committees are available from this office, in regular print format only.

Other Legislative Offices

- * All legislators' offices and some administrative offices of the Legislature are now located in the Capitol building. "Crowded" is the word most often applied to legislators' offices. When the Capitol expansion project is completed, many legislative offices will be relocated to the new underground building north of the Capitol. Until then, most legislators and their staff members will continue to occupy the current cramped quarters in the main Capitol building. Some will be moved temporarily to the old Insurance Building southeast of the Capitol during the renovation. When scheduling a visit to a legislative office, it is advisable to verify the current location and ask which elevator provides access.
- * The Legislative Budget Board and the Legislative Council have offices in both the Capitol and the Reagan Building. Offices of the Sunset Advisory Commission are in the Reagan Building, and most standing legislative committees are housed in either the Sam Houston Building or the Reagan Building. These buildings are much newer than the Capitol; the office suites are less crowded and somewhat more accessible.
- * There is no standard design for a legislative or committee office. Legislators and their staffs must make the most efficient use of inadequate space. Because the office size and furniture arrangement varies so widely, it is best to call ahead to inquire about accessibility of the specific offices to be visited. It may be necessary to explain what is meant by accessibility.
- * Some House members' offices and some Senators' staff members are in second floor "lofts" added to first floor offices. These lofts can be reached only by a steep stairway, and are totally inaccessible to persons using wheelchairs. Most of these stairways do have handrails.
- * From time to time, a few legislators have TDDs installed in their offices. This is the exception, not the rule.

Governor's Reception Room (Room 200)

[MAP 2, LOCATOR 8]

- * There is a double door at the entrance to this room, with a conventional doorknob. It has no automatic door closer.
- * The floor in this room is level with the doorway.

- * The texture of the carpeting is similar to that in the House and Senate Chambers. It is not thick-pile.

Lieutenant Governor's Reception Room

[MAP 2, LOCATOR 16]

- * The floor is tile, but there are thick-pile rugs covering much of the floor space in this room.

Legislative Reference Library (Room 207)

[MAP 2, LOCATOR 10]

The Legislative Reference Library is located on the second floor of the Capitol, due north of the Rotunda. As you enter the library, several librarians sit at a desk to your immediate right.

- * The heavy door into the library opens outward. It has a conventional doorknob and an automatic door closer.
- * Most areas of the first floor of the library are negotiable by wheelchair users, but with some difficulty due to narrowness of aisles. The carpeting is not thick-pile. The height of some of the bookshelves is problematic. There are usually several library staff members on duty who can provide assistance.
- * On a shelf just inside the door and to the left are large clipboards containing cumulative information in regular print format about daily legislative action and schedules. These clipboards are too heavy for some individuals to lift without assistance, as the volume of information grows during a session.
- * At the back of the library (straight down the aisle as you enter) are racks of newspapers, association newsletters, and other periodicals. The newspapers are of accessible height, but some of the newsletters are placed too high to reach from a wheelchair.
- * Computer terminals are available to the public in the library for checking bill status and legislative action. The terminals are on tables that may be too low for some wheelchair users to pull directly up to them. The chairs at all the tables in the library can be moved.
- * Public reference files containing one copy of each pending bill are located on the far right-hand side of the library's first floor, along with self-service photocopying and change machines. Copies are 10 cents per page. The aisle leading to this area is narrow, and the space itself is quite small. Turning a wheelchair around in this area is difficult, especially if there are many other people around.
- * On the second floor (or loft) of the library are many state agency and legislative reports and other documents. The only access to this level is via a narrow staircase, which does have a handrail. A library staff person will retrieve

- specific items on request. The card catalog and the electronic information system on the first floor list the second floor materials.
- * Materials in the Legislative Reference Library are in regular print format only; this library does not have documents on tape, in braille, or in large print. (See also "State Library and Archives," page 34.)
 - * A telephone line providing information on the status of bills in the Legislature is staffed by Reference Library personnel. This number is 1-800-253-9693 (outside Austin) or 463-1251 (in Austin). When you call to inquire about legislative action on a bill, give the staff person as much identifying information about the bill as possible, such as the bill's number and subject and the sponsor's name.
 - * The library has an old TDD that is not currently hooked up. Bill status can be obtained by individuals with hearing impairments by calling the regular bill status phone numbers using the Texas Relay services of Southwestern Bell.
 - * At present, the only way to obtain the text of pending legislation on computer is to subscribe to the private sector information service that offers this electronic format. This level of service costs at least \$1,500 per session.

Press Room

- * The representatives of the media who make up the Capitol Press Corps have offices and mailboxes here. The entrance to the Press Room is just to the left of the entrance to the foyer that leads into the House Chamber. Half of the media personnel are housed in a "loft" that is up a steep flight of stairs just inside the Press Room door. This door is usually open.

Capitol Basement Snack Bar (Room G-24) [MAP G, LOCATOR 2]

The snack bar in the Capitol basement is at the bottom of the large staircase just east of the Rotunda. The seating area for the snack bar is underneath and wraps around the stairway. The entrance to the cafeteria-style line runs to the north, just east of the seating area. As you pay for your food at the end of the line, you will make two sharp left turns to reach the seating area. The floor of the seating area is U-shaped, surrounding the staircase. Entering the seating area from the snack bar line, you will be in the bottom left-hand corner of the U. Dog guide users should move a chair and allow the dog to sit under the table. There is no room between the tables and the walls. It is likely that a dog in any of the aisles in the seating area would be stepped on.

- * The door into the snack bar line remains open during serving hours.
- * The aisle through the cafeteria-style line is just wide enough for a wheelchair, but wheelchair users are restricted to forward motion, due to lack of room to turn around.
- * Snack bar staff are frequently too busy to assist in carrying customers' trays to the seating area.
- * Food counters are so high that individuals in wheelchairs cannot see much of what is offered.
- * Many of the available food items are not listed on the menu board that is posted on the wall. There is no braille menu.
- * There are moveable tables and chairs in the snack bar, but maneuvering around them often presents serious challenges. This is particularly true if the tables and chairs have been rearranged to accommodate large groups of people or if the snack bar is especially crowded.
- * Tables are high enough for wheelchair users to roll directly up to them.
- * There is no carpeting in the Basement Snack Bar, also known as the "Linoleum Club."

Chapel

[MAP 4, LOCATOR 1]

- * There is a dangerously steep ramp, with no handrail, leading into the Chapel.
- * The Chapel has a wood floor and contains a church pew, kneeler, and altar table. Without moving the furniture, the only area in which a wheelchair can fit is just inside the doorway.

OTHER ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES IN THE CAPITOL BUILDING

Men's Public Rest Rooms

[MAPS G and 1-4, LOCATOR M]

- * There are no tactile indicators outside any of the rest rooms in the Capitol. None of the Capitol rest rooms has raised letters or color cues on the faucet taps.
- * The men's room in the basement of the Capitol, located across from the staircase in the west wing, has one stall that is somewhat wider than average, but not large enough to be able to close the door once inside. The sink is too high to reach from a wheelchair and there are faucet knobs instead of levers. This rest room usually has a very foul odor.
- * The basement men's room in the east wing has no accessible stall or sinks.
- * There is a step leading into the second floor men's room in the east wing behind the Senate Chamber. Ironically, this rest room does have an accessible stall.

- * The men's room just northwest of the Rotunda on the second floor has been reported to be the most accessible to wheelchair users. It has an exceptionally wide stall with a curtain instead of a door. The rings from which the curtain hangs are frequently in disrepair, however. There is no low-mounted paper towel dispenser. Sinks are of accessible height, but have faucet knobs instead of levers.
- * The one wide stall in the third floor men's room northwest of the Rotunda is neither wide nor deep enough to be truly accessible, and there are faucet knobs on the sinks instead of levers. When exiting this rest room, it is difficult to reach the door handle from a wheelchair.
- * The small, individual rest rooms in the east and west wings on the third floor behind the Senate and House Galleries are designated for legislators and staff only. No specific provisions are made for situations in which a person with a disability is being assisted by an attendant of the opposite sex. A good approach in such a case would be to ask permission to use one of these small third floor rest rooms.
- * The men's room on the fourth floor, just north of the Rotunda has a wide stall that is not quite deep enough to allow a wheelchair user to close the door. The faucet knobs on the sinks are fairly easy to turn. There are no levers on the sinks, which are mounted low. There is a trash can at accessible height. Some individuals with mobility impairments may not be able to reach the door handle when exiting this rest room.

Women's Public Rest Rooms
[MAPS G and 1-4, LOCATOR W]

- * There are no tactile indicators outside any of the rest rooms in the Capitol. None of the Capitol rest rooms has raised letters or color cues on the faucet taps.
- * The women's rest room in the basement of the Capitol (just across from the snack bar) has one accessible stall with the door opening outward. This stall, which has grab bars, is large enough to close the door once inside. One sink has faucet levers instead of knobs. There is one low-mounted towel dispenser and soap dispenser. A wide mirror is mounted at accessible height, and there is a low counter in front of it. This counter is too low for some wheelchair users to be able to pull directly up to it, however. Floor space and design of this rest room are sufficient for maneuvering a wheelchair. The door from the hallway into this women's room swings outward and opens by pulling a handle. This door has an automatic closer, but is not nearly so heavy as many of the doors in the Capitol.
- * The women's room in the east wing of the basement has no accessible stalls or sinks.
- * The women's room on the first floor (west wing) should not be considered accessible. There is one wide stall, but

- floor space is not sufficient to maneuver a wheelchair in this rest room. The sinks have faucet knobs.
- * The women's rest room behind the Senate Chamber on the second floor of the east wing has a step up at the entry door and is designated for Senate members and staff only.
 - * The women's room on the third floor just outside the House Gallery has one stall that is wider than average and has grab bars, but is not large enough to close the door once inside. This rest room does have a low-mounted mirror, soap dispenser, and paper towel dispenser. There are faucet levers on one of the sinks. A long hallway leads through an outer lounge area into this rest room, and there are no doors at the entrances. There is a full-length mirror in the outer lounge area.
 - * The small, individual rest rooms in the east and west wings on the third floor behind the Senate and House Galleries are designated for legislators and staff only. No specific provisions are made for situations in which a person with a disability is being assisted by an attendant of the opposite sex. A good approach in such a case would be to ask permission to use one of these small third floor rest rooms.

Drinking Fountains

- * Of the sixteen water fountains located in the Capitol Building, three have a second fountain mounted low on one side in an accessible position. They are found in the following locations: basement level, down a small hallway running south from the center of the main hall; third floor, east hall behind the Senate Gallery; and third floor, just outside the Old Supreme Court Room. When checked during development of this guide, the accessible fountain in the basement was not in working order. There is an additional low drinking fountain in the second floor, south corridor entering the Senate Chamber from the east side, but due to the slope of the floor and the positioning of the fountain, it is not accessible to persons in wheelchairs.
- * Assistance may be needed in using these drinking fountains, since they all have push-buttons, knobs, or handles that may be difficult for persons with mobility impairments to operate.

Dog Guides

- * When dog guides need to relieve themselves, the Capitol Police suggest using the southeast or southwest corner of the Capitol grounds, along the fence dividing the grounds from the 11th Street sidewalk.

Telephones, TDDs

- * Almost all pay telephones in the Capitol are inside conventional phone booths and therefore inaccessible to wheelchair users. The five public phones that are accessible to individuals in wheelchairs are in the following locations: two pay telephones just outside the women's rest room across from the snack bar in the basement; one pay telephone below the staircase just inside and to the right of the east entrance to the Capitol on the first floor; one pay telephone at the end of a group of phone booths under the stairwell just west of the Rotunda on the first floor; and one pay telephone at the top of the stairs on the second floor, east wing, just outside the glass door. This door has a conventional doorknob and an automatic closer.
- * A TDD is available for incoming and outgoing calls in the office of the House Sergeant-at-Arms, just outside main entrance to the House Chamber, west of the Rotunda. The telephone number for this TDD is 512-463-0581.
- * Capitol complex visitors may also call out on the TDD located in the office of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, Room 1007, Sam Houston Building. Incoming calls on this line are received at the main committee number, 512-463-0360.
- * Another TDD is located in the 24-hour dispatch area of the Capitol Police office, Room 103, Central Services Building, 1711 San Jacinto Street, four blocks northeast of the Capitol. The telephone number for this TDD is 512-463-3323. It is used primarily for incoming calls, but visitors may use the machine on request.
- * There is no signage in the Capitol complex indicating the location of these telephones.

Emergency Procedures

- * There appear to be no plans for alerting or evacuating individuals with disabilities in case of an emergency, such as a fire, in the Capitol.
- * There are no visual fire alarms.
- * No evacuation or other emergency information is available for individuals with visual impairments.
- * Floor maps posted near elevators that could be used for evacuation directions, are mounted too high for individuals in wheelchairs to see.
- * Some fire extinguishers are mounted too high to be reached from a wheelchair. Some are at an accessible height, but are very large.
- * No equipment is in place for emergency evacuation of persons who are mobility-impaired.
- * There is only one permanent accessible exit from the Capitol (at the east door). At present, a ramp out the northernmost

door at the far end of Capitol's west wing leads into the temporary walkway to the Reagan Building.

- * Apparently, there are no publicly posted emergency procedures for evacuating persons with disabilities from any of the other buildings in the Capitol complex.

OTHER CAPITOL COMPLEX BUILDINGS

The primary focus of the current edition of this guide is on the Capitol Building. Following is some information on other buildings in the complex obtained while gathering data on the Capitol.

John H. Reagan Building

The Reagan Building, one block northwest of the Capitol, is accessible from the Capitol via the temporary walkway described in the previous section. The north entrance of the building is also accessible. There is a circular drive off 15th Street, on the north side of the building, with a curb cut in front of the door.

Entrances

- * The north entrance from the circular drive, located on 15th Street, is accessible. Just outside it are accessible parking and a curb cut.
- * The south entrance is also accessible via a narrow temporary walkway from the Capitol. (See also "Temporary Walkway," page 4.)

Building Information

- * A building directory is located just inside the south entrance. All information is posted in print only. Please note that the counter in the main lobby is the House Committee Coordinator's Office and is not a general information desk for the building.
- * There is no braille or tactile signage in the Reagan building, except in the elevators.
- * House Bill Distribution is located in the Legislative Council office in the Reagan Building. The counter in this office is too high for wheelchair users to access comfortably.

Elevators

- * The Reagan Building elevators have raised indicators next to the buttons inside, which are at an accessible height. There are also raised floor numbers outside the elevators just above the "up" and "down" call buttons.

Committee Meeting Rooms

- * Many House Committees meet in the Reagan Building; most of these meeting rooms are on the first floor and are numbered in the 100s; room numbers of those located in the basement are designated with a "G."
- * Meeting rooms in the Reagan Building have wall-to-wall carpeting.
- * Since the Reagan Building is much newer than the Capitol, its meeting rooms are somewhat more accessible. Most of them have fixed audience seating with a fairly wide center aisle; there is limited space in front of the audience area that can accommodate one or two wheelchairs. Room 104 has a larger open area in front.
- * Witnesses usually testify standing at a podium facing the committee. These podiums have removable microphones that can be hand-held. There is room for a wheelchair next to the podium, but there is no podium or table at an appropriate height for wheelchair users.
- * All of the U-shaped committee tables are on raised platforms that are not ramped.

Rest Rooms

- * Rest rooms in the Reagan Building are essentially inaccessible to persons in wheelchairs. Although some have stalls that are a bit wider than average, minimal floor space makes maneuvering difficult if not impossible. The wide stall in the first floor women's room has grab bars. Sinks have very small knobs that must be gripped and turned.

Drinking Fountains

- * Drinking fountains in the Reagan Building are mounted low and are operated with pushbars.

Telephones

- * Telephones throughout the Reagan Building are wall-mounted and low enough to be reached from a wheelchair.
- * Pay telephones are located on the first floor down the corridors running east after you enter the north or south door, and in the basement (ground floor) just in front of the elevators.

Snack Bar

- * The basement snack bar in the Reagan Building is larger and has more open space than that in the Capitol. Wheelchair users will have difficulty negotiating a sharp, narrow corner at the end of the check-out line, but the counter is on rollers and the snack bar staff will move it on request to allow passage.

- * Food counters are too high for all items to be visible to individuals in wheelchairs.
- * There is no braille menu.
- * The view of the wall-mounted menu is blocked for some wheelchair users by tall food counters.
- * Some of the self-service food displays are too high and others too low for some individuals with mobility impairments to see and to reach.
- * The height of the tables in this snack bar allows wheelchair users to roll directly up to them.

Sam Houston Building

- * The doors on the south side of the Sam Houston Building constitute its only accessible entrances. There are two sets of doors just to the left and right of the center of the building's south side.
- * Among the doors on the north side of the building is a revolving door.
- * The curb cut off the circular drive south of the building, leading to the accessible entrance, is often blocked by buses or other vehicles.
- * The women's rest room on the second floor (mezzanine) has some accessible features.

Senate Bill Distribution

- * Senate Bill Distribution occupies the second floor of 311 E. 14th Street, a small building several blocks east of the Capitol. There is an elevator, but the hallways are extremely narrow.

Texas Employment Commission (TEC)

- * Many visitors to the Capitol complex meet for breakfast or lunch at the cafeteria on the first floor of the TEC Building. Wheelchair access to the TEC Building, particularly from the Capitol, is severely limited due to the construction that is underway. Wheelchair users have recently reported that the easiest and safest route to the cafeteria involves parking in the accessible parking area near the TEC Annex, taking the elevator in the Annex up to the third floor, crossing the third floor skybridge to the TEC Building, and taking the elevator down to the first floor. The only accessible rest rooms in the TEC Building are in non-public staff areas.

Lorenzo de Zavala State Library and Archives Building

Access

- * There is a ramp leading to the State Library and Archives Building beginning at the southwest corner of the building.
- * Braille signage has been placed throughout this building.
- * There are several well-marked accessible men's and women's rest rooms in the State Library and Archives Building.

Services

- * The Texas State Library is a Federal and State Depository. Its Reference/Government Publication section has copies of all government documents that are found on the second floor of the Legislative Reference Library, except out-of-state statutes. To inquire about a specific document call 512-463-5455. The State Library does not receive either of the daily legislative information services.
- * The Texas State Library's Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped provides library services to Texans who are unable to read standard print due to a visual, physical, or learning disability. The Division's telephone number is 512-463-5458. According to the Division's information sheet, the State Library's Adaptive Technology Center system has four components: the Kurzweil Reading Machine; microcomputers with voice output; large print and electronic braille printers; and special software. "The patron can read a book or magazine on the Kurzweil Reading Machine, transfer the information to a microcomputer, and translate it into braille or large print. He can then take a print or braille copy home or back to the office, as a print reader would a photocopy."
- * Copies of bills for use in the Adaptive Technology Center may be purchased directly from Senate Bill Distribution or House Bill Distribution, or may be photocopied in the Legislative Reference Library. (Please see "Senate Bill Distribution," page 33, "House Bill Distribution," page 31, and "Legislative Reference Library," page 25). Some legislators' or committee offices, advocacy organizations, or interest groups may be willing to provide a free copy of a pending bill on request.
- * The Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped can assist in getting printed materials recorded on audio cassette tape. The Library keeps a referral list of persons who have volunteered to do taping on request. Patrons pay for the materials required.
- * The Division maintains a list of certified individual braillists and of proprietary entities that do brailleing.
- * The Disability Resource Center, a clearinghouse of information on disability issues, is located in the State Library. For information call 512-463-5458.

- * Occasionally, the State Library will record legislative documents onto audio cassette. For example, the State Library's budget information has been recorded, as has one bill currently pending in the Legislature that pertains to library services.
- * Self-service photocopy machines are available for public use in the State Library. There is a charge for copies.

The Governor's Mansion

- * The Governor's Mansion is accessible to wheelchairs through the driveway off Lavaca Street, at the back of the mansion.
- * Group tours are given every 20 minutes from 10:00 a.m. until 11:40 a.m., Monday through Friday. Large groups should reserve space in advance. Individuals and small groups can join a tour during the hours previously mentioned. It is advisable to arrive by 9:00 or 9:30 a.m. on the day you wish to take a tour, since the tours are often crowded. Tours during March, April, and May when the Legislature is in session (odd-numbered years) are fully booked far in advance.
- * Persons with visual impairments may ask to feel the objects and textures along the tour.
- * These tours are not routinely interpreted for persons with hearing impairments.
- * Tours are accessible to wheelchair users.
- * For information or to make advance arrangements, call 512-463-5516.

ADDITIONAL ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES IN THE CAPITOL COMPLEX

Sign Language Interpreters

- * Proceedings of the House and Senate and their committees are not routinely interpreted.
- * The House of Representatives has recently created one full-time paid interpreter position which will be filled at least during the months the Legislature is in session. The interpreter is available to accompany persons with hearing impairments to private meetings with legislators and staff, and to interpret legislative committee meetings and Capitol tours on request. Two additional interpreter positions are funded by the Senate on an as-needed basis. Capitol visitors who will need an interpreter for a tour or a private meeting or who wish to request that a committee meeting be interpreted should call to schedule this service several days in advance. The sign language interpreter service can be reached by TDD at 512-463-0581 or by voice phone at 512-463-0910. At present, the full-time interpreter is located in the House Sergeant-at-Arms' office, just outside the main entrance to the House Chamber, west of the Rotunda.

Information and Materials in Braille

- * At this time, there is no provision for routinely producing legislative materials in braille.
- * There are no indicators or maps in the Capitol complex in braille or raised characters, except in certain elevators, and in the State Library and Archives Building. (See also "Elevators," page 7, and "Lorenzo de Zavala State Library and Archives Building," page 34.)
- * Information regarding brailleing of specific documents is available through the State Library. (Please see "Lorenzo de Zavala State Library and Archives Building," page 34.)
- * The Texas Commission for the Blind produces braille copies of certain bills and other legislative items that pertain to the agency or its services, as well as a braille guide to the Capitol. (See also "Capitol Tours and Tourist Information," page 7.) For information call the Texas Commission for the Blind at 512-459-2500.

Audio Tapes and Typewritten Transcripts

- * The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) provides a limited number of copies of the Advocacy, Inc., *Legislative Bulletin* on audio cassette tape. This bulletin, which covers most major legislative activities concerning disabilities, is produced each week during the regular legislative session. For information, contact CTD at 512-478-3366 or Advocacy, Inc., at 512-454-4816 (voice or TDD).
- * All House and Senate committee proceedings and floor debate are available on audio cassette tape. Some transcripts are also available typed in regular print. There is a charge for tapes and transcripts. For information, contact:

House Committee Coordinator
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768-2910
(512) 463-0850
(Located on the first floor of the Reagan Building, at
the counter in the lobby)

-OR-

Senate Staff Services
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, TX 78711
(512) 463-0430
(Located at 311 E. 14th Street, second floor)

CAPITOL ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE
FEEDBACK FORM

Your feedback on the Capitol Accessibility Guide is an important part of the development of this document, and we appreciate your participation.

1. Did you find the information in the *Capitol Accessibility Guide* to be useful on your visit to the Capitol?

YES NO

If you answered NO, what specific changes would make this a more useful guide?

2. Did you find the information in the *Capitol Accessibility Guide* to be accurate?

YES NO

If you answered NO, what specific inaccuracies did you find?

3. Did you find any accessibility issues that should have been covered but that were left out of the *Capitol Accessibility Guide*?

YES NO

If you answered YES, what specific Capitol accessibility issues would you like to see discussed in the next revision?

4. Please feel free to add any additional comments here:

When you are through, please mail this survey back to us. Thank you again for your feedback.

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Austin, TX 78760-9243







