

STUDY OF THE USE OF CHAMBERS IN THE  
CAPITOL BUILDING FOR MEETINGS  
OF LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES



*Bulletin No. 87-22*

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION  
OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU  
STATE OF NEVADA

August 1986



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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 60—Committee on Legislative Functions

FILE NUMBER...135

**SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**—Directing the legislative commission to study the use of the chambers in the capitol building for meetings of legislative committees.

**WHEREAS**, The cornerstone of the democratic form of government is the ability of each citizen to express his opinion to his elected representatives concerning proposed legislation; and

**WHEREAS**, There is only one room in the legislative building that can accommodate more than 52 persons for a meeting of a legislative committee; and

**WHEREAS**, Because of the controversial nature of some proposed legislation, and the number of persons desiring to express an opinion, the rooms in the legislative building have frequently been overcrowded, causing many persons to be denied access to the legislative process; and

**WHEREAS**, The chambers in the capitol building are not being used and could provide needed space for the meetings of legislative committees; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, THE ASSEMBLY CONCURRING**, That the legislative commission is hereby directed to study the feasibility of using the chambers in the capitol building for meetings of the standing committees of the legislature; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the study include a determination of the type and cost of any alterations and furniture which might be necessary to meet the needs of the committees and which are consistent with the historical decor of the chambers; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the legislative commission present its findings and any recommendations to the 64th session of the legislature.

18  22





## REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 64TH SESSION OF THE NEVADA LEGISLATURE

This report is submitted in compliance with Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 60 of the 63rd session of the Nevada legislature, which directs the legislative commission to study the use of the chambers in the capitol building for meetings of legislative committees. The measure specifies that the study include a determination of the type and cost of any alterations and furniture which may be necessary to meet the needs of the committees and which are consistent with the historical decor of the chamber.

The legislative commission appointed a subcommittee to conduct the study and recommend appropriate action to the 1987 session of the Nevada legislature. Legislative members of the subcommittee were:

Senator James I. Gibson, Chairman  
Senator Lawrence E. Jacobsen  
Assemblyman Byron Bilyeu  
Assemblyman Joseph E. Dini, Jr.

This report is transmitted to the members of the 64th session of the Nevada legislature for their consideration and appropriate action.

Respectfully submitted,

Legislative Commission  
Legislative Counsel Bureau  
State of Nevada

Carson City, Nevada  
August 1986

\* \* \* \* \*

## LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

Assemblyman Louis W. Bergevin, Chairman  
Assemblyman Bob L. Kerns, Vice Chairman

Senator James H. Bilbray	Assemblyman Robert M. Sader
Senator Lawrence E. Jacobsen	Assemblyman James W. Schofield
Senator Helen A. Foley	Assemblyman Danny L. Thompson
Senator Kenneth K. Redelsperger	Assemblyman Barbara A. Zimmer
Senator Sue Wagner	



## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This summary represents the conclusions reached by the subcommittee. It describes the actions which the subcommittee believes are the most fiscally conservative short-term approach to deal with the shortage of large meeting rooms in the legislative building.

The subcommittee recommends:

1. The department of museums and history postpone its planned restoration of the chambers in the capitol building until after the adjournment sine die of the 64th session of the Nevada legislature.
2. The director of the legislative counsel bureau coordinate, with the administrator of the department of museums and history and the supervisor of the buildings and grounds division of the department of general services, the use of the chambers in the capitol building for meetings of standing committees of the 1987 legislature when the anticipated attendance of the meetings may exceed the capacity of the committee rooms in the legislative building.



REPORT TO THE 64TH SESSION OF THE NEVADA LEGISLATURE  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION'S SUBCOMMITTEE  
TO STUDY USE OF CHAMBERS IN CAPITOL BUILDING  
FOR MEETINGS OF LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

I. INTRODUCTION

The growth in the capacity and responsibilities of American state legislatures which has been taking place over the last 30 years continues unabated during the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

As with the other states, over the last two decades the Nevada state legislature has taken a central role in dealing with the issues and problems facing the citizens of its state. This shift of responsibility from the other branches and levels of government has emanated from different sources. First, it is an outgrowth of the needs of the electorate for more direct representation and responsiveness from their elected officials. It has also resulted from a series of federal and state judicial decisions that followed the United States Supreme Court rulings on legislative districting in Baker v. Carr (1963) and Reynolds v. Sims (1965) - decisions requiring equality of representation based on population in both houses of the state legislatures. It has also been stimulated by the recent change and emphasis in responsibility for governmental programs caused by the so-called "new federalism."

Nevada with its growth in population has been especially affected by the pressures on its state legislature for increased services. The legislature has met, within the parameters of fiscal constraint, the new demands placed upon it. It has constructed a separate legislative building with committee rooms and offices for its legislators and developed a strong, capable staff. It has also installed a modern information system using computer technology. Even with these improvements, however, there are continuing demands on legislative resources and facilities.

The interim study on the use of the chambers in the capitol building for meetings of legislative committees is an outgrowth of concern about the inability of the committee rooms in the legislative building to accommodate the number of people wishing to participate in certain hearings of high public interest. It has become common, because of concerns for safety of persons visiting the legislative building, for persons to be denied access to overcrowded meeting rooms.

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<sup>1</sup>Pound, William T. "The State Legislatures," The Book of the States Lexington: The Council of State Governments, 1986, 76.

Because of this problem, and the realization that it would not diminish during the 1987 session of the Nevada legislature, the members of the 1985 legislature decided that a study by the legislative commission focusing on obtaining additional meeting space was needed. The capitol building appeared to be the logical location for that space. The legislative commission assigned the study to its building subcommittee which is composed of Senators James I. Gibson and Lawrence E. Jacobsen and Assemblymen Byron Bilyeu and Joseph E. Dini, Jr. The subcommittee met on September 20, 1985, to consider various choices available to it.

As directed by Senate Concurrent Resolution (S.C.R.) No. 60, (File No. 135, Statutes of Nevada, 1985) the subcommittee reviewed the:

- Feasibility of using the chambers in the capitol building for meetings of standing committees of the legislature; and
- Type and cost of alterations and furniture which might be necessary to meet the needs of the committees and which are consistent with the historical decor of the chambers

## II. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section of this report represents the subcommittee's findings and recommendations for a low cost temporary solution for the committee room space needed by the 64th session of the Nevada legislature. The subcommittee notes that a longer term means of addressing the space needs of future legislatures should be considered by the members of 1987 legislature. As mentioned by the architect who designed the legislative building:

In addition to committee room crowding, audit, accounting, fiscal, research, bill drafting \* \* \* all need more space. Leasing space elsewhere in Carson City is inefficient and expensive.<sup>2</sup>

### Director to Coordinate Use of Chambers in Capitol Building for Meetings of Standing Committees

The capitol, completed in May of 1864, served the fourth through the 50th sessions of the Nevada legislature. Through the years, various improvements, restoration and additions were carried out. The building, noted for its design, quality of materials used, and beauty, served all

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<sup>2</sup>"Study for an Addition State of Nevada Legislative Building Drawn for Legislative Commission." Graham Erskine, Architect. August 30, 1984, 2.

three branches of government well for many years. Towards the 1960's, however, it became clear that it did not meet the space needs of the legislature. As noted in the publication entitled History of the Nevada State Capitol and Governor's Mansion:

The rapid growth of Nevada during the 1960's--when the state recorded the second highest population gain in the nation--made it evident to lawmakers that legislative functions had outgrown the Capitol's facilities. To solve the problem, the 1967 legislature appropriated a total of \$3,422,600 for the construction of a legislative building. The architectural firm of Ferris and Erskine, Vhay and Ferrari, and Raymond Hellman designed the new building and the Walker Boudwin Construction Company commenced building in September 1968. It was dedicated on June 9, 1970, making Nevada one of only three states in the country with its legislature separate from the Capitol.<sup>3</sup>

The new legislative building has served the legislature for eight regular and two special sessions. The same pressures that lead to its construction are now, as noted in the introduction, beginning to place strains on its ability to meet the needs of the legislature, staff, and the citizens who wish to be present and offer direction for legislation.

The lack of adequate space is most apparent in the limited size of the meeting rooms of the committees. There are 11 committee rooms in the legislative building. The largest room, senate hearing room (room 131), has a capacity of 304 people. The remaining rooms have capacities, according to the architect that designed the building, ranging from 25 to approximately 50 members of the public. According to records of the legislative counsel bureau, during the last three regular sessions the capacities of the smaller rooms have been exceeded on several occasions.<sup>4</sup>

In an effort to provide additional meeting room space for those committees expecting a large number of the public to attend, the senate hearing room has been made available on a first come first served basis. Coordination for use of the room is carried out by the secretary of the senate's office

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<sup>3</sup>History of the Nevada State Capitol and Governor's Mansion; Carson City: Department of General Services, 1986, 13.

<sup>4</sup>Letter dated December 10, 1984, from Graham Erskine, architect, to Donald A. Rhodes, director of the legislative counsel bureau, concerning preliminary plans and specifications for a legislative annex.

and the receptionist of the administrative division of the legislative counsel bureau. Unfortunately, the need for that room has often been greater than its availability.

There is, however, a short-term solution that may mitigate the meeting space problem in the legislative building during the 1987 session of the Nevada legislature.

After the legislature's departure from the capitol building, the building was completely restored in the late 1970's to lessen the potential damage to it from earthquake or fire. The two refurbished but essentially unfurnished chambers are now under the control of the department of museums and history. They are occasionally used, with temporary seating space provided by the buildings and grounds division, for public meetings. The department of museums and history has also used the chambers for various displays.

The administrator of the department of museums and history advises that the department is now working on plans to furnish the chambers to conform with the architecture. It is anticipated that donations from the private sector will be sought for that purpose. The refurbishing, however, may be postponed to accommodate the needs of the 1987 legislature.

According to the administrator of the department of museums and history:

It would appear that our most practical use of the old senate and assembly chambers in the next session is to leave them as is and pursue restoration during the 1987-89 biennium. There is no question that period restoration would be incompatible with the requirements of a standing committee of the legislature as it conducts business on a day-to-day basis. On the other hand, the rooms are perfectly usable for that purpose if the proper seating, electronics, \* \* \* were in place.<sup>5</sup>

The subcommittee concurs with the administrator's views. The chambers are large enough to accommodate meetings of well over 100 people. The old assembly chamber has approximately 2,400 square feet of floor space and the senate chamber in the capitol building has approximately 1,700 feet of

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<sup>5</sup>Letter dated July 23, 1986, from J. Scott Miller, administrator of the department of museums and history, to Donald A. Rhodes, director of the legislative counsel bureau, concerning the possible use of the chambers in the capitol building.



floor space. Appendix A contains diagrams of the second and third floors of the legislative building. The meeting rooms are shown with their approximate seating space. Appendices B and C are diagrams illustrating how the chambers in the capitol building could be used for meetings of standing committees.

Arrangements for use of the chambers in the capitol for meetings of standing committees could be carried out with relatively short notice. The conditions mentioned in the administrator's letter also appear to have been met. The buildings and grounds division is in possession of folding tables, which if appropriately draped, could be used for head tables and tables for committee staff and witnesses. The legislative counsel bureau has a sufficient number of folding chairs to accommodate a meeting of at least 150 people.

With these considerations in mind, the subcommittee, therefore recommends:

1. The department of museums and history postpone its planned restoration of the chambers in the capitol building until after the adjournment sine die of the 64th session of the Nevada legislature.
2. The director of the legislative counsel bureau coordinate, with the administrator of the department of museums and history and the supervisor of the buildings and grounds division of the department of general services, the use of the chambers in the capitol building for meetings of standing committees of the 1987 legislature when the anticipated attendance of the meetings may exceed the capacities of the committee rooms in the legislative building.

In making these recommendations, the subcommittee anticipates that the primary use of the chambers in the capitol building will be to provide space for meetings of legislative committees when the senate hearing room (room 131) is committed for other meetings. A similar scheduling system, as is now used for the senate meeting room could be used. Reservations would be made for room 131. If that room is already reserved, then one or both of the chambers in the capitol building could be scheduled for use.

The subcommittee is also cognizant of the suggestions that the chambers in the capitol building be used on a regular basis for meetings of standing committees that routinely have a large number of the public in attendance. If the experience during the early part of the 1987 legislative session proves that such useage is required, it can be coordinated by the leadership of the Nevada legislature and the director of the legislative counsel bureau.



### III. APPENDICES

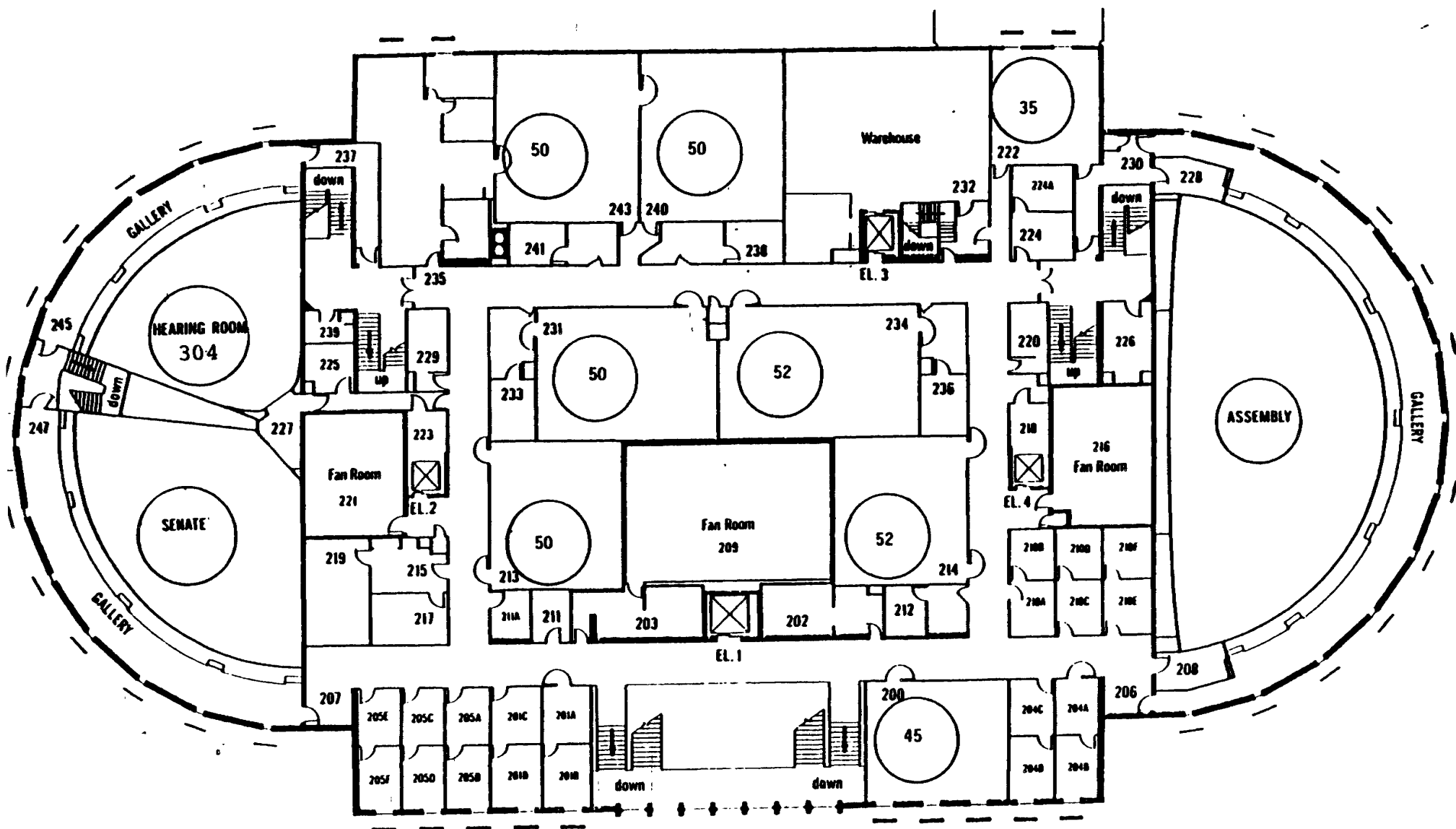
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## APPENDIX A

Diagrams of the second and third floors  
of the legislative building



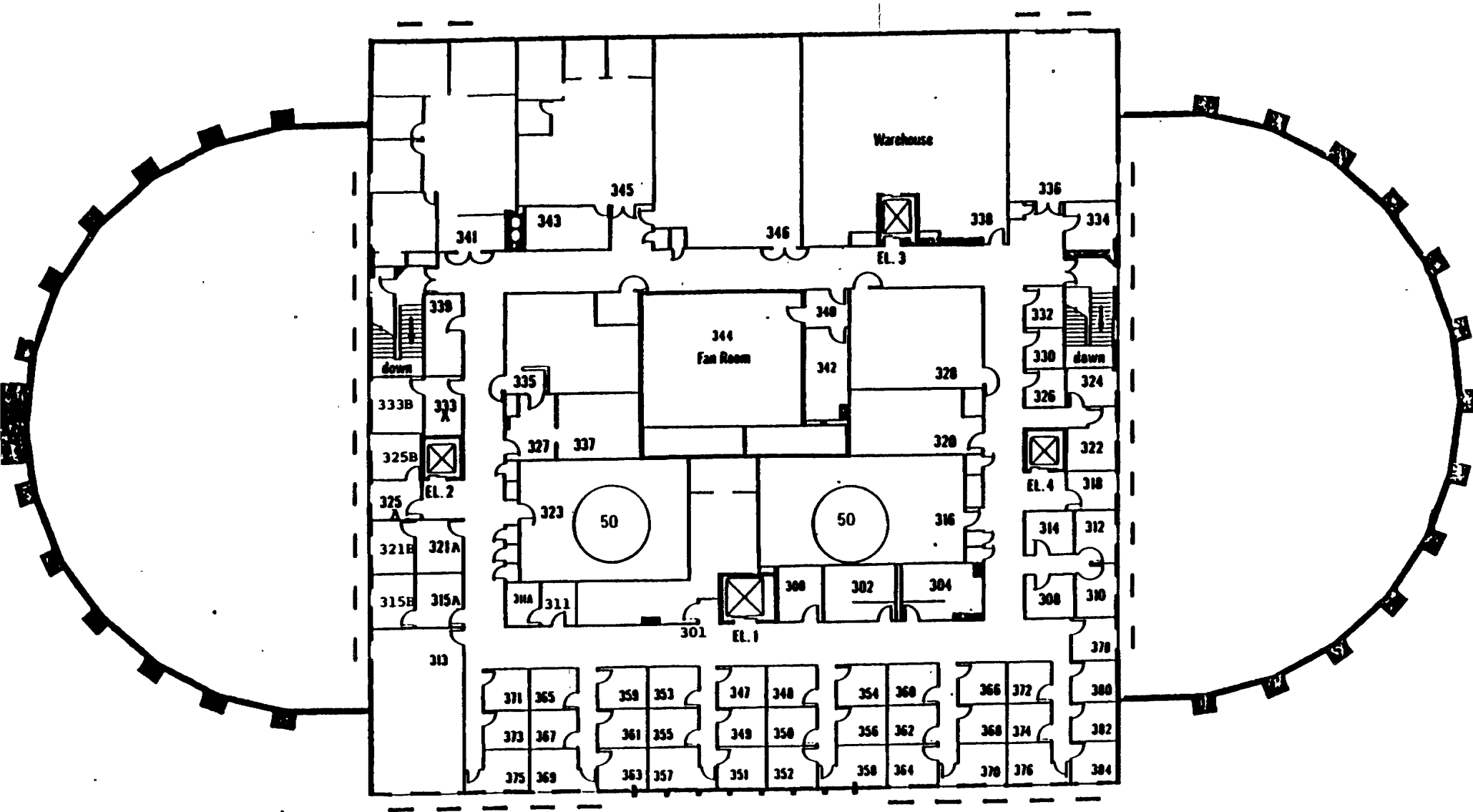


SECOND FLOOR

CARSON ST.







THIRD FLOOR  
CARSON ST.

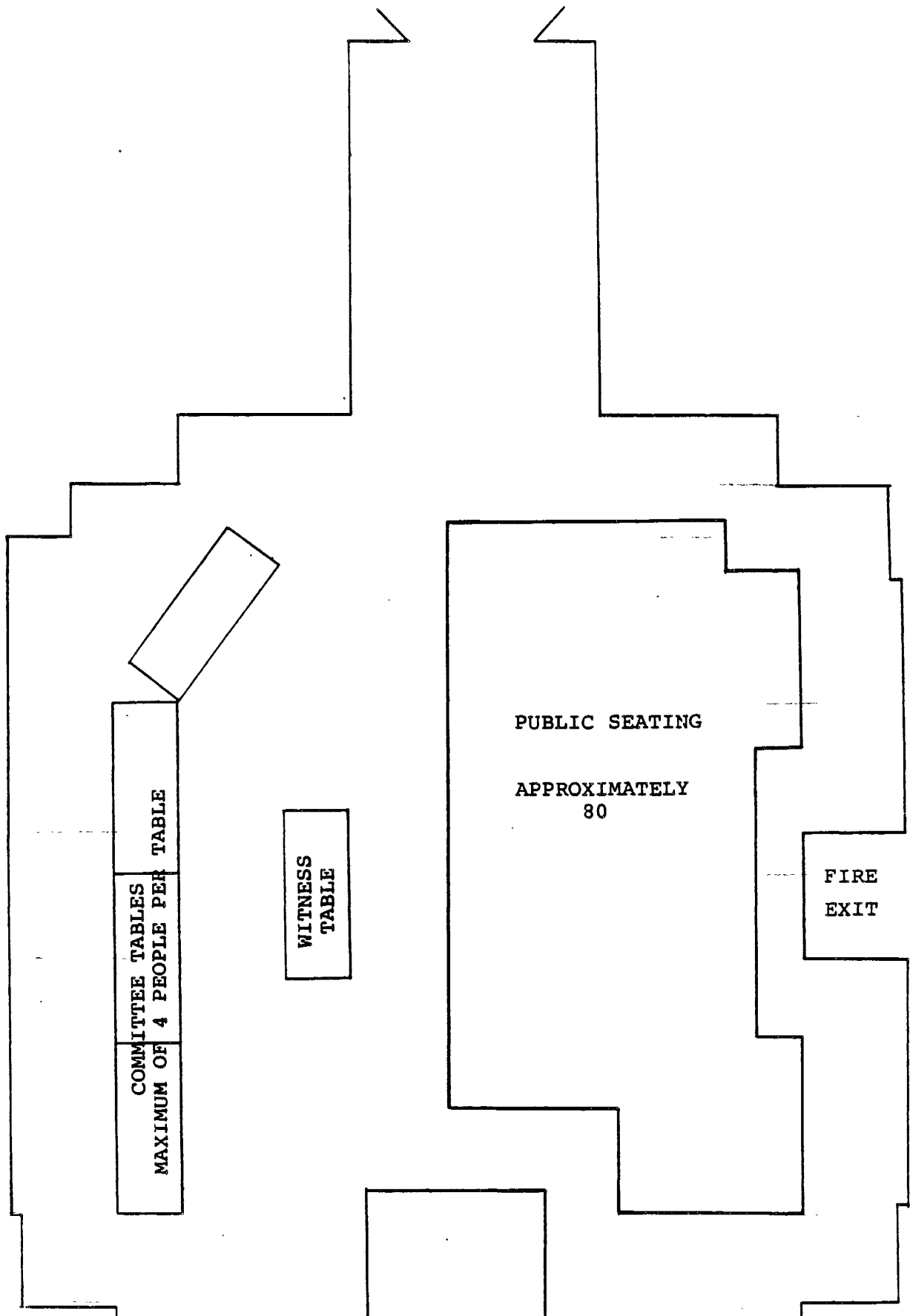


## APPENDIX B

Diagram illustrating how the senate chamber  
in the capitol building could be used for  
meetings of standing committees



SENATE CHAMBERS



1700 SQUARE FEET

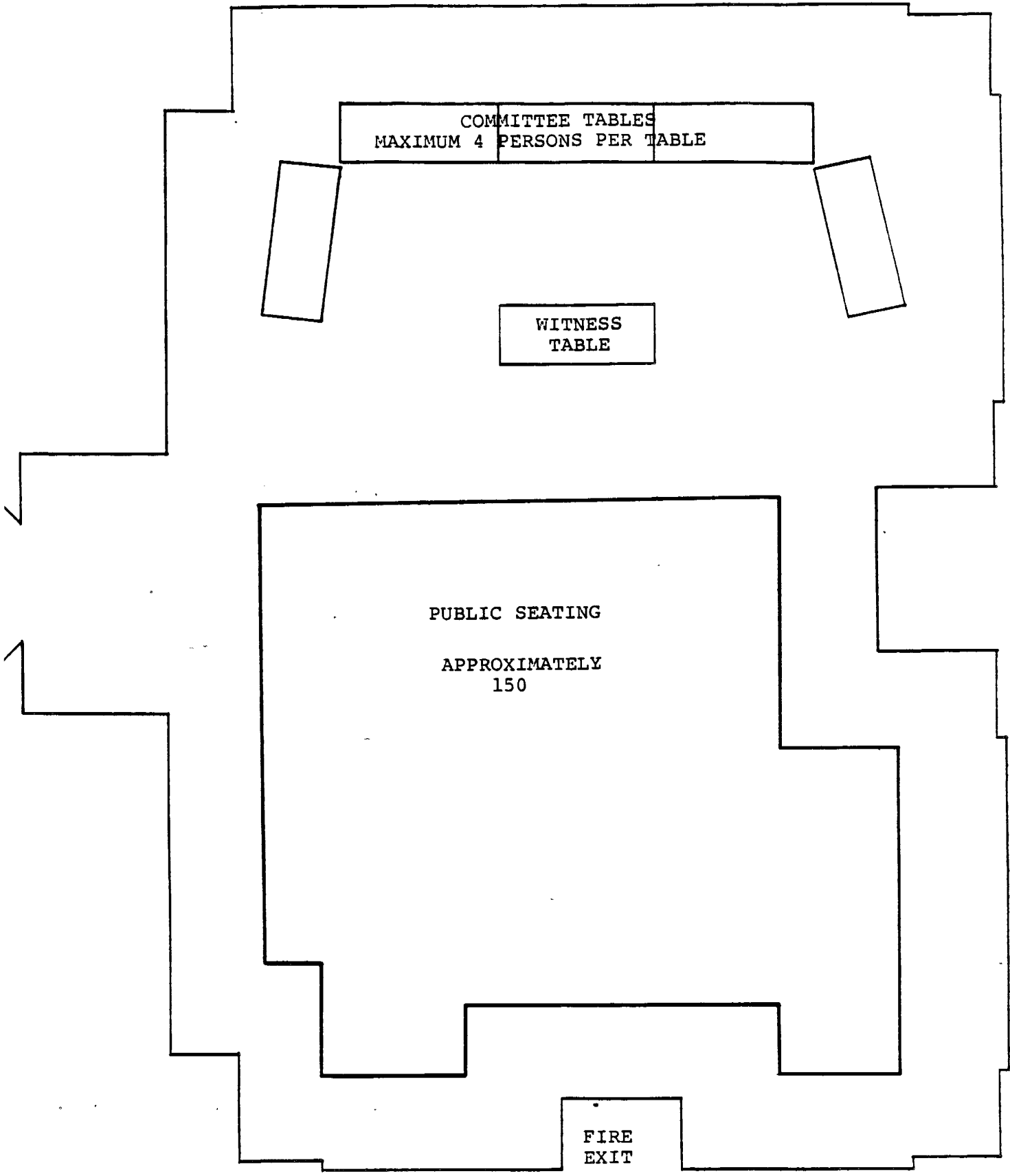


## APPENDIX C

Diagram illustrating how the assembly chamber  
in the capitol building could be used for  
meetings of standing committees







A floor plan diagram of a room. The room has an irregular shape with several protrusions and indentations. At the top, there is a rectangular area labeled 'COMMITTEE TABLES' with a sub-label 'MAXIMUM 4 PERSONS PER TABLE'. Below this, there are two small rectangular tables, one on the left and one on the right. In the center of the room is a rectangular area labeled 'WITNESS TABLE'. Below the witness table is a large rectangular area labeled 'PUBLIC SEATING' with a sub-label 'APPROXIMATELY 150'. At the bottom center, there is a small rectangular area labeled 'FIRE EXIT'. The room is divided into several sections by these tables and seating areas.

COMMITTEE TABLES  
MAXIMUM 4 PERSONS PER TABLE

WITNESS  
TABLE

PUBLIC SEATING

APPROXIMATELY  
150

FIRE  
EXIT

2400 SQUARE FEET