



Commonwealth of Virginia *Office of Governor Terry McAuliffe*

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Governor McAuliffe, First Lady Hold Ribbon Cutting for Executive Mansion Accessibility Ramp

~ Addition balances preservation and enhanced access for all guests ~

RICHMOND – Governor Terry McAuliffe and First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe today were joined by veterans and Virginians with disabilities for a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of an accessibility ramp at the Executive Mansion that will enhance access and safety for all guests.

Speaking about today's announcement, **Governor McAuliffe said**, "The Executive Mansion is the people's house, and this ramp will ensure the most accessible and dignified welcome for all Virginians, from our wounded warriors to our disabled citizens."

"We want everyone who visits the Executive Mansion to feel welcome, and to achieve that goal, every visitor must be able to enter on the main floor," **said First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe**. "Through thoughtful collaboration with architectural and preservation experts, we were able to provide enhanced access that complements the historic character of the home."

The ramp is connected to an existing breezeway leading to the southern entrance on the first floor of the Mansion. The first floor is the formal reception area used to welcome visitors and guests. Prior to the ramp's construction, those who could not climb the steep steps to the historic portico had to use an elevator located at the basement level on the back of the home to access the first floor.

Jim Rothrock, Commissioner of the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, said: "It is exciting to see one of the final barriers removed in our Capitol Square, and this addition extends our Commonwealth's traditional hospitality now to all Virginians."

"As other important historic sites have proven, we can preserve and honor our past while making subtle changes that provide a more dignified and welcoming experience for all citizens," **Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs John Harvey said.** "The Governor and First Lady should be applauded for their commitment to our veterans and other citizens with mobility impairments."

The project was evaluated and unanimously approved by the Art and Architectural Review Board, and the work complied with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The Department of General Services worked closely with the Department of Historic Resources and the Capitol Square Preservation Council on the project, with careful consideration given to everything from the materials and colors used to the structure's handrails and landscaping.

Chris Beschler, Director of the Department of General Services, said, "Our agency worked collaboratively with our preservation partners at each turn, ensuring any enhancement at the mansion pays respect to its significant standing in Virginia's history."

"The consultation process resulted in a design solution that DHR was able to fully support," **said Julie Langan, Director of the Department of Historic Resources.** "The result is a ramp that in no way impacts the original residence and is sensitively inserted into the landscape."

Kathleen Kilpatrick, Executive Director of the Capitol Square Preservation Council, added: "Very close and careful collaboration with the project team has given us a well-designed and discreet feature that fully respects the landmark and serves citizens."

Other Virginia historic sites have taken similar measures. At Monticello, a National Historic Landmark and the only house in the United States that is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, access to the main floor is provided via a ramp on the north side of the house.

The Executive Mansion, designed by Alexander Parris and completed in 1813, is a National Historic Landmark and is recognized on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. It is the country's oldest purpose-built executive residence still in use today.

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