

# Some things new amid all that is old under the Gold Dome

By Ty Tagami  
Capitol Beat News Service

When Georgia lawmakers return to Atlanta for the new legislative session, they will proceed to their weathered wooden desks, and if they are observant, they will notice something new.

The carpeted floor will offer a little more give, and the old stains will be gone.

When they reach their desks, some will bend to the floor to plug in their laptops, as they have long done. But someone will point out that they no longer need to: the old desks now have modern outlets

— not just a standard power plug but also a USB-A connector, and even a future-proofed one for USB-C.

Then, other details will register, and it will become clear this is not exactly the same place they left in April.

The fireplaces (unused these days) now have hearths of marble, salvaged from the old state Supreme Court building after the new one was erected nearby.

Perhaps most obvious: the wooden chairs now carry their weight without creaking or worry.

And if lawmakers and

visitors were to lift their eyes to the ceiling high above, they would see something that was never there before: gold, real gold.

When they were last here, the ceiling was decorated with gold-colored paint. Now it is adorned with gold leaf, applied by a restorationist hoisted high into the air on a platform supported by tons of steel scaffolding.

Like many of the more than 550 artisans and other workers who renovated the Capitol over the past eight months, the gold leaf was from Georgia, said Gerald Pilgrim, the state official who oversaw the face lift.

"We actually have the receipts from Dahlonge."

The carpet is native, too, from the weave masters in Dalton.

Both were line items in a restoration budget that totaled about \$82.5 million, with about \$10 million for furniture and similar things and the rest for construction, said Pilgrim, chief of staff at the Georgia Building Authority.

The work started in early May, a month after lawmakers finished their last legislative session. And the bulk of it was completed in time for their return this week, though there are a couple more phases to go.

Some of the most consequential work will be invisible to the lawmakers and to the observers who come to watch them, though repeat visitors might sense a difference. For one thing, the HVAC system is new. Pilgrim said it was the most challenging task, since it was the first significant update since the 1950s, around the time Americans started seeing color in their televisions.

The workers also laid 133,000 feet of wiring under the floors to connect all the new systems. In addition to those modern outlets at legislators' desks, there is a sound system in

the visitors' gallery above them, for the hard of hearing. Workers also removed some of the fixed seats there to make room for wheelchairs.

From where visitors sit, they would be hard-pressed to notice one major upgrade that will quickly become apparent to the representatives and senators below.

The legislators used to play musical chairs, swapping out their own failing seats for functional furniture from a nearby and likely unobtrusive desk mate (no doubt one from the opposing party).

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**Making Amends**

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”  
Proverbs 28:13 NIV

It is important to make amends for the wrongs we have committed, humbly and sincerely apologizing to those we have hurt and trying to redress the wrongs. In recovery circles (AA and NA, for example), steps numbers 8 and 9 of their 12-step programs address this issue. Making amends is crucial for people in recovery because if they don't do this, they are carrying around all kinds of emotional baggage such as guilt and shame, which can be a trigger to drink or use drugs. What I've learned over the years is that the sooner I make my apologies the better, since the apology almost immediately begins to improve my relations with the other person and thus both of us begin to feel better. For minor sins, the apology can come right after the act, in the same breath as it were. But for more serious wrongs it may require asking for time to sit down with the other person and humbly asking for their forgiveness. And this isn't just something that recovering substance abusers should do. All of us should make daily inventories of our lives and seek to make amends to those we've wronged. It's wise to remember that we are human and we're likely to need this practice until our final days.

—Christopher Simon

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