



U.S. CAPITOL *Visitor Center*

U.S. Capitol Visitor Center Exhibition Hall Includes Touchable Model of the Capitol Dome

At the center of the Visitor Center's Exhibition Hall stands an 11-foot-high touchable model of the Capitol dome. The dome model provides visitors with an intimate look at this iconic symbol of representative democracy. The polyurethane model is tough, durable, easily cleaned, and it never needs to be painted since color is impregnated into the mold.

Architectural features of the Capitol dome, both interior and exterior, have been meticulously replicated. The front of the model shows the exterior of the dome from its base to the Statue of Freedom. The back side of the model depicts a cutaway showing the construction of the inner and outer cast iron dome and the interior of the Rotunda, from the fresco depicting George Washington to the sandstone blocks of the Rotunda floor.

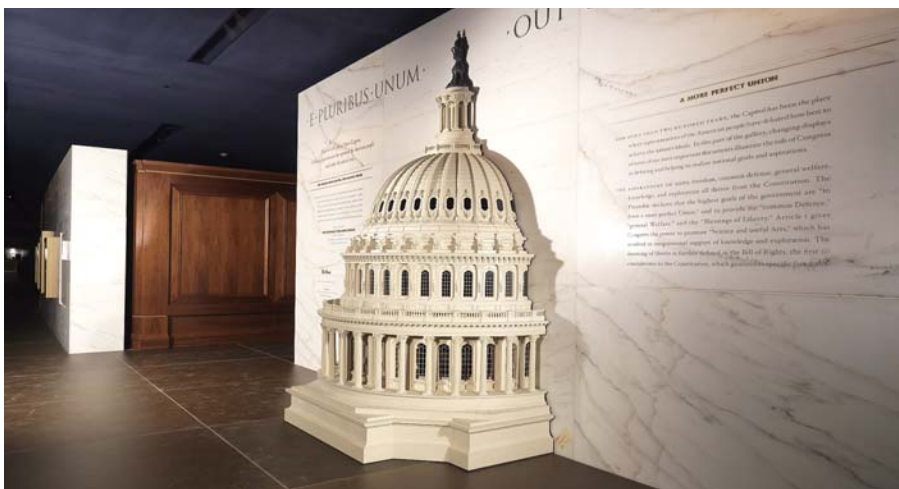
The lighting on the dome simulates a day/night cycle, showing how the light in the tholos (the ring of columns below the Statue of Freedom) comes on when Congress is in session.

Visitors are able to peek through the windows on the front of the model and see inside to the artistic treasures in the Rotunda, including paintings and bas-reliefs that were carefully color-matched to the actual paintings on the east side of the Rotunda. Even the fresco masterpiece in the Rotunda ceiling, the "Apotheosis of Washington" by Constantino Brumidi, was carefully replicated using a combination of photographs and hand painting.

To ensure the accuracy of the model, a combination of historical drawings and laser scans were used to make the initial 2-D drawings, verified by an Architect of the Capitol historian. These were followed by 3-D drawings in which features were literally "sculpted" with a computer mouse and converted into molds.



More than two years in the making, a scale model of the Capitol dome has been installed in the Capitol Visitor Center's Exhibition Hall. As seen here, the model faithfully replicates the interior architectural details and artistic treasures of the Rotunda.



An 11-foot-high model of the Capitol dome is the centerpiece of the Exhibition Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center.