



## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUSTIN

January 13, 2010

Mr. John Sneed  
Executive Director  
State Preservation Board  
201 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 950  
Austin, Texas 78701

Mr. Mark Wolfe  
Executive Director  
Texas Historical Commission  
1511 Colorado  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mr. Sneed and Mr. Wolfe:

As members of the Travis County delegation of the Texas House, we recognize both the tremendous privilege and responsibility of hosting the seat of Texas government, and many of its most visible and iconic symbols, including the State Capitol and the Governor's Mansion. Therefore, we have a keen interest in a proposed expansion being considered by the State Preservation Board and the Texas Historical Commission to the Mansion.

Most of us have toured the Mansion and seen the devastating results of the fire. We clearly understand the need to upgrade the mechanical and electrical infrastructure while restoring the structure in order to better preserve and protect the Mansion in the future, and we appreciate the need to improve compliance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. However, we have serious concerns about a non-historic expansion that has been proposed to the Mansion that has ably and honorably served our state and our First Families since 1856.

A decision regarding expansion will determine the destiny of one of our state's most sacred structures--one of only two National Historic Landmarks in Austin. However, only one plan has been presented, and that plan is based on the assumption that *significant* expansion is necessary. We believe the current proposal may destroy the architectural and historic integrity of the Mansion, and requires the removal of a magnificent heritage live oak tree. The structural addition would be visible from three of the four adjacent streets and would impact the iconic and majestic frontal façade view of the Mansion.

We understand that the proposed expansion requires a permit from the Texas Historical Commission in order to proceed, but that no formal application for a permit has been submitted. We also understand that the Antiquities Advisory Board must consider any

expansion and then make a recommendation to the Commission, although no special meeting of the Antiquities Advisory Board has been scheduled. Further, we understand that only one expansion proposal is currently being considered. In light of the outpouring of concern from Texans regarding this proposal, it would seem prudent to reconsider the actual need for the expansion, or give serious consideration to other options that preserve the architectural and historic integrity of the Mansion.

Because of the significant concerns that have been expressed to us, we respectfully request answers to the following questions prior to action being taken by your respective agencies that may impact the architectural or historic integrity or footprint of the Mansion:

- 1) Will there be any opportunities for public input regarding the expansion proposal before a final decision is made, and, if so, when and where will those occur?
- 2) What is the basis upon which any decision was made that expansion of the Mansion was necessary, who made such a decision, and was the public involved in such a decision?
- 3) Will additional proposals be solicited for accommodating expansion that take into account the architectural and historic integrity of the existing structure, and if so, when will the public have the opportunity to provide input on such?
- 4) What is the timeline for the repair of the existing building, and how will it be impacted by any current or future proposed expansion decisions?

As you know, the Governor's Mansion is one of Texas' most important and visible historic landmarks. How we as Texans treat it sets a standard and sends a signal across our state as to the inherent value of landmarks and historic preservation. We appreciate your consideration of our concerns, and look forward to your response.

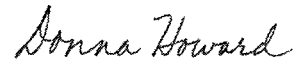
Sincerely,



Rep. Valinda Bolton



Rep. Dawnna Dukes



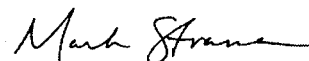
Rep. Donna Howard



Rep. Elliott Naishtat



Rep. Eddie Rodriguez



Rep. Mark Strama