



STATE OF DELAWARE  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
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**MATTHEW MEYER**  
GOVERNOR

DELAWARE.GOV

July 7, 2026

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE STATE HOUSE  
OF THE 153<sup>RD</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Pursuant to Article III, Section 18 of the Delaware Constitution, I am exercising my line-item veto authority by vetoing the \$35 million appropriation for the Legislative Hall Expansion Project in House Bill No. 500 and returning it with my objections to the Delaware State House.

Amidst an unprecedented affordability crisis, when Delaware residents are struggling, when families are struggling to pay their rent, healthcare costs, their utility bills, or their grocery bill, this is not the time to spend 35-million of taxpayer dollars on the Legislative Hall expansion. Moreover, this is only the first down payment. When all is said and done, this project will cost taxpayers at least \$116 million. This amount does not include the cost of the upcoming \$23 million legislative parking garage.

Whether it is building and improving our schools, investing in our communities, or finding additional ways to support working families, there are far more important priorities than renovating and expanding Legislative Hall. For years, state government has told our school leaders that we do not have funding for needed capital improvements to schools across our state. With many schools at capacity and others under-enrolled, we must prioritize capital investments so that our school buildings are safe and appropriate and provide the highest quality learning environments for our kids. Funding such school building projects and investing to turn underutilized school buildings into new and better uses, must be our priority. And while I understand that improvements to Legislative Hall's security, accessibility, and public participation are paramount, these needs could be met at a lower cost to the constituents whom we are all proud to serve.

As I travel across our state, the number one concern I hear about is affordability. This issue crosses party lines, and rises above politics. Throughout Delaware, no matter who someone voted for, people are looking for solutions. They were promised the American dream – work hard for your family and the system will work for you. They are working hard, they are taking care of their families, and yet, they can't make ends meet.

In the past 17 months, my administration has been laser-focused on stemming the affordability crisis exacerbated by President Trump. The General Assembly and I have worked together and

across the aisle to make life better for Delawareans by passing bipartisan legislation to further healthcare, housing, and energy reforms.

But affordability is not a standalone issue – government must play its part. With affordability comes accountability. With accountability comes responsibility.

We have worked together to advance historic investments in education and affordable housing. We are reducing the growing cost of healthcare and presenting new job opportunities to Delawareans in diverse industries, from making movies to banking. We are fighting like never before to keep energy costs low for families. You have played a pivotal role in crafting, revising, and supporting changes that make a meaningful difference to working people during challenging times. But we know the job is not done. There is more that we can do, together. We lose considerable ground in this fight to keep Delaware affordable if you greenlight \$116 million in office improvements. These dollars are better spent helping Delawareans directly.

When I hear from people who cannot afford their first home, or who pay more for childcare than their mortgage, or who cannot afford to see a doctor, I cannot support \$35 million to expand Legislative Hall. When I hear from small businesses that they cannot pay their rent or from non-profit organizations that they are struggling to serve our most vulnerable populations, I cannot support \$35 million for this expansion. When I meet people who cannot manage to rent a room or make their car payment, I cannot support \$35 million for this expansion project. These concerns have resulted in intense and justified media scrutiny from multiple sources.

### **Public Scrutiny Over the Proposed Initial \$35 Million for Expansion Has Been Rightly Intense**

There have been multiple media reports regarding concerns about the cost of this expansion. As the *Delaware State News* reported on June 26, 2026 in an article titled “Opposition grows toward \$35-million Leg Hall expansion in Delaware bond bill”:

DOVER — A new addition to the state’s bond bill includes a \$35-million expansion of Legislative Hall, which some lawmakers and Delawareans have voiced opposition to.

Plans to upgrade the statehouse have existed for a while now, as Legislative Hall has not undergone a major renovation since the 1990s. Although there were plans to expand it last year, these were halted due to cost concerns.

In February, the bipartisan Legislative Building Committee met to discuss and vote on the addition to Legislative Hall, which they approved. Also at this meeting, updates were provided on a \$23-million, 345-space parking garage near the building. Of these parking spots, 247 would be for public use.

The garage had received funding from previous capital budgets and did not require additional funds from the fiscal 2027 bond bill. It is slated to be open by Labor Day 2027.

On Thursday, June 25, the fiscal 2027 bond bill was officially filed, after the Joint Capital Improvements Committee met for markups the two days prior. The finalized bill weighed in at \$1.25 billion, or about \$315.6 million more than Gov. Matt Meyer had proposed last January.

The \$35 million Legislative Hall addition had not been included in the governor's recommended capital budget.

During Wednesday's Joint Capital Improvements Committee meeting, this had been a concern for Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek. He stated it "looks really bad" for the body to "give \$35 million to ourselves" at a time where people are looking for relief in other ways.

"And when I say ourselves, I mean us, I mean staff," he explained. "And I understand that the people that come into the building ... but (these people) are Legislative Hall insiders, for the most part, that we see all the time. It's very rare that we get the general public showing up on a frequent basis."

Committee chair Rep. Debra Heffernan, D-Wilmington, noted that a lot of the updates would be for safety and security. Co-chair Sen. Jack Walsh, D-Wilmington, added that many of the offices for legislative attorneys and other staff members are "just insufficient."

"It's not just us. It's the public. There are more visitors here than you think," Walsh said. "This is the public's building. This is their building. We should have a building that reflects that ... We're not asking for new offices or anything like that for us. This is for the public, it's for staff, it's for everyone."

Smith ultimately removed himself as a cosponsor from the bond bill, which he confirmed to the Daily State News on Friday was partially because of the \$35-million allocation for the Legislative Hall expansion.

John Flaherty, a citizen public advocate and director of the Delaware Coalition for Open Government, also expressed concerns on Friday. In a letter to the House of Representatives, he urged them to amend the bond bill and remove the \$35 million, which he called a "glaring misuse of taxpayer funds."

"Slipping a multi-million-dollar item into the budget behind closed doors completely bypasses the open government Delawareans expect," Flaherty added. "The Delaware General Assembly is in full session for just 43 days out of the entire year. Spending \$35 million to expand a complex that sits largely empty or underutilized for more than 300 days a year is an indefensible use of state revenues."

He also noted that, with the advent of Zoom and other electronic communications, the “legislative process no longer relies on the physical square footage of committee rooms in Dover.”

The bond bill, or House Bill 500, will be voted on by the General Assembly on the last legislative day, June 30. It requires a three-fourths majority vote in both chambers.<sup>1</sup>

As cited in the article above, John Flaherty of the Delaware Coalition for Open Government, wrote the following in a letter to the Delaware House of Representatives dated June 26, 2026, a copy of which was shared with my office:

I am writing to urge your support to amend House Bill 500, the FY27 Bond Bill, and take out the \$35,000,000 snuck in for Legislative Hall Expansion.

As House Bill 500, the Fiscal Year 2027 Bond and Capital Improvements Act, is voted out of the House Bond Bill Committee and heads to the House floor, I am writing to share both my strong support for the state’s critical capital investments and my profound concern over a glaring misuse of taxpayer funds embedded within the bill.

The vast majority of HB 500 represents a vital investment in the First State’s future.

The Joint Committee on Capital Improvements deserves praise for funding essential school construction, critical road and mass transit infrastructure, clean water initiatives, and long-overdue maintenance for state facilities.

These projects directly improve the daily lives of Delawareans, create good-paying jobs, and strengthen our local economies.

However, good stewardship of public resources requires absolute transparency.

It is with this duty in mind that I alert you to a deeply flawed, non-meritorious provision that is now advancing to the floor: the \$35,000,000 appropriation to fund an expansion of Legislative Hall.

This massive \$35 million expenditure lacks justification and should be amended out on the House floor for several compelling reasons:

This enormous project was pushed forward without public scrutiny.

In a troubling departure from the democratic process, the public was completely barred from providing input at the recent Bond Bill hearing—a standard

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<sup>1</sup> <https://baytobaynews.com/stories/opposition-grows-toward-35-million-leg-hall-expansion-in-delaware-bond-bill,328725>

opportunity for civic engagement that is routinely allowed across all other legislative committees.

Slipping a multi-million-dollar item into the budget behind closed doors completely bypasses the open government Delawareans expect.

The Delaware General Assembly is in full session for just 43 days out of the entire year. Spending \$35,000,000 to expand a complex that sits largely empty or underutilized for more than 300 days a year is an indefensible use of state revenues, especially when community-facing infrastructure projects face strict funding limits.

The landscape of public engagement has fundamentally changed.

With the advent of Zoom, Facebook Live, and modern electronic and social media communications, the public's ability to monitor, testify, and participate in the legislative process no longer relies on the physical square footage of committee rooms in Dover.

Virtual access has democratized our legislative process, rendering a costly physical expansion obsolete.

At a time when we must carefully prioritize every single dollar of the capital budget, spending \$35 million [. . .] while actively shutting out the public's voice—sends a terrible message to the people of Delaware.

I strongly urge you to vote in favor of the many worthy infrastructure and capital improvements throughout HB 500, but I respectfully request that you support an amendment on the House floor to strike the \$35,000,000 Legislative Hall expansion from the final bill.

Thank you for your time, your hard work in these final days of the session, and your commitment to an open, accountable government.

In a June 29, 2026 article on DelawareOnline, it was reported:

*Legislative Hall renovations included, sparks concern outside Dover*

Among the proposals, one project drew some attention – a roughly \$35 million addition to Legislative Hall in Dover.

Members of the Legislative Building Committee voted in February to revive the east-side expansion after shelving it last year.

The Statehouse has served as the state's Capitol for over nine decades and was last updated in the 1990s.

Expansion plans include adding four large meeting rooms and relocating the entrance from the west to the east side of the building.<sup>2</sup>

These concerns have existed long before this year. In a Delaware Public Media article from April 2025, titled “Delaware lawmakers halt Legislative Hall expansion over budget concerns, parking garage to proceed” it was reported:

Delaware legislative leadership decides to halt the Legislative Hall expansion project over budget concerns and federal funding cuts.

The roughly \$130 million Legislative Hall renovation project has received some backlash from the public and lawmakers alike over the past year due its hefty price tag, and now legislators have announced part of the project will be halted indefinitely.

Initial plans were to expand the state’s capitol building to include four new large spaces for public hearings, additional private space for staff and a 73% increase in spaces for operations and infrastructure.

That part of the project is estimated to cost \$96 million, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requested \$50 million be allocated to it next fiscal year, with an additional \$60 million expected to be requested in the out years.

While next year’s funding request will no longer be fulfilled in part due to general budget constraints and the announcement of \$38 million in federal health care cuts, the proposed three-level parking garage will proceed as planned.

“The parking garage project is expected to go out to bid in late April pending final agency approval from the City of Dover, the Fire Marshal’s Office and DNREC. This is a lump sum bid which is currently funded with a total estimated cost of \$33 million,” OMB Director Brian Maxwell told the Joint Bond Committee.

The fully-funded structure is anticipated to be three floors, each approximately 42,000 square feet with a total of 345 parking spaces.

97 of those spaces will be restricted for lawmakers and those who work at Legislative Hall, who will also have access to the \$2 million underground tunnel connecting the garage to the state capitol.

The parking garage will be located on the current Del-One Credit Union lot with construction anticipated to begin in July 2025 with completion by December 2026.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/politics/2026/06/29/takeaways-from-delaware-bond-bill-2026/90708451007/>

Construction on the expansion part of the project was anticipated to begin in the summer or fall of 2026 and be finished in time for the 2029 legislative session.

“While we have been looking forward to expanding and modernizing our Capitol Complex to allow for increased public participation, critical public safety enhancements, and additional office space to relieve overcrowding of year-round, full-time staff, we have decided to call on the Building Committee to halt the building expansion project for the time being,” a joint statement from Democratic legislative leadership reads.

To date, OMB says a total of \$6.58 million has been spent across both the expansion and parking garage projects for design and environmental planning. Remaining funds that have been allocated to the project will now solely be used for the completion of the parking garage.<sup>3</sup>

In an article titled, “Public concern arises over price tag of \$150 million Leg Hall expansion currently underway,” from November 2024, Delaware Public Media wrote:

An almost \$150 million renovation project at Dover’s Legislative Hall is underway, but some members of the community are raising questions about the price tag.

The Legislative Building Committee met for the first time just over a year ago — although talks began in 2022 — to begin hashing out the details for an addition to the capitol building built in the 1930s, as well as a new 4-level parking structure with an underground tunnel.

Legislative Building Committee Chair Rich Puffer says previous Bond Bills have already invested close to \$40 million into the project for architectural and engineering planning, but now the project is looking for an additional \$110 million, having received \$10 million from the FY25 Bond Bill.

Delaware Coalition for Open Government Spokesperson John Flaherty and at least 30 others signed a letter calling for the Office of Management and Budget to reconsider the renovation.

“These legislators, over the last couple of years, have invested a lot of money in Zoom. You can attend the Zoom hearings from home, and I don’t think you can justify spending \$120 million to double the size of a building that’s only used 42 days out of the year,” Flaherty said.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.delawarepublic.org/politics-government/2025-04-04/delaware-lawmakers-halt-legislative-hall-expansion-over-budget-concerns-parking-garage-to-proceed>

Puffer on the other hand, who is also the Chief Clerk of the Delaware House, says the building has a severe lack of meeting space for those who attend in-person, and parking during the legislative session has only grown more challenging.

“It is a chunk of change, definitely, but the legislature certainly feels that it’s worth it because we are literally just running out of space,” Puffer explained.

The project includes a 350-car parking garage with an underground tunnel for legislator access connected to Legislative Hall, as well as four additional large meeting spaces for public hearings.

Debates over including the privacy tunnel versus a sky bridge were discussed, but the committee ultimately decided to proceed with the underground pedestrian tunnel.

“There are a few reasons that we decided to go ahead with the tunnel, one being safety and security of the members and staff. Not that there’s any threats out there, but certainly it’s good to have them be able to get in the building safely and quickly,” Puffer said. “It just also just makes it easier to get over from the parking garage to Legislative Hall.”

But Flaherty is adamant that the money could be better spent somewhere else within the state.

“There’s a whole lot of other needs in the state that could use \$120 million, or a portion of that, to fix schools, some of the medical facilities the state operates — just a whole lot of demand. And the legislators, I think, need to be more cognizant of the fact that they’re there to serve the people that we’re not there to serve them.”

The budget approval process will not be officially finalized until June 2025.

If the timeline continues according to plan, the parking garage will begin construction in July 2025 with an expected completion date by the end of 2026.

The Leg Hall addition is expected to begin construction in either the summer or fall of 2026 and be done in time for the 2029 legislative session.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.delawarepublic.org/politics-government/2024-11-24/public-concern-arises-over-price-tag-of-150-million-leg-hall-expansion-currently-underway>

**Exercising the Line-Item Veto Here is Appropriate  
and Aligns with the Precise Purpose It Was Enshrined for in Delaware’s Constitution**

An important treatise of law, *Corpus Juris Secundum*, has identified why many states have authorized their governors to impose a line-item veto on appropriations bills:

The purposes of an appropriations item or line-item veto are to give the executive, who is elected statewide rather than from a particular district, the power to achieve fiscal constraint and to advance statewide rather than parochial fiscal interests by excising unneeded “pork barrel” programs or projects from an appropriations bill so as to restrain public expenditures and to permit the governor to disentangle issues so they will be considered on their individual merits. The purpose of the appropriations item veto is to prevent, if possible, the adoption of omnibus appropriation bills, logrolling, the practice of jumbling together in one act incongruous subjects in order to force a passage by uniting minorities with different interests when the particular provisions could not pass on their separate merits.<sup>5</sup>

Here, the Bond Bill is an omnibus capital appropriations measure, and Delaware’s Constitutional line-item veto allows the Governor to approve the State’s broader capital program while excising discrete projects that, when considered on their own merits, do not justify the commitment of statewide taxpayer dollars or state borrowing authority.

I do not take this act lightly, but am doing so in what I see as the public interest. Historically in Delaware, the Governor’s ability to veto, including the right to line-item veto, has been considered an important check on the legislature, including the legislature’s spending power. It allows the Governor to do what good stewardship requires: separate sound appropriations from specific spending items that should not receive executive approval, without rejecting an entire bill that may otherwise serve the public interest. When the Delaware Supreme Court examined this authority in *Perry v. Decker*, it looked to Judge Spruance’s explanation of the line-item veto at the 1897 Constitutional Convention. Judge Spruance described the line-item veto as a needed safeguard because appropriations bills often combine multiple expenditures in a single measure, not all of which receive the same measure of public input as they may otherwise have as single bills:

As to that, I do not suppose anybody who is at all familiar with the legislation either of the Federal Government, or of the States, would object to now at this day, because we know so well how different subjects of appropriation are mingled together, some of which are wise, and some of which are dreadfully unwise, and when the President has always been hampered by an inability to do anything except to accept the whole or reject the whole.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 82 C.J.S. *Statutes* § 68 (2026).

<sup>6</sup> *Perry v. Decker*, 457 A.2d 357, 360 (Del. 1983); see also *Opinion of the Justices*, 210 A.2d 852, 855 (Del. 1965) (“it is the function of the Governor to act as a check upon the final enactment of

That is the purpose served by this veto. I am not rejecting the General Assembly’s work as a whole. Rather, I am using the precise constitutional authority Delaware provides to preserve the appropriations that merit approval while withholding approval from a discrete item that does not. This action therefore reflects the very balance Judge Spruance described: avoiding an all-or-nothing veto while protecting taxpayers from expenditures that, in my judgment, are unwise at this time.

Turning back nearly 130 years ago, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1897 – as described by the late Delaware Supreme Court Justice Randy Holland in his authoritative treatise on the Delaware Constitution – viewed the executive veto as a necessary check on “hasty, improvident, and vicious legislation.”<sup>7</sup> Respectfully, as referenced above, during this particularly trying economic time, I cannot support this project’s cost or scope as provident.

It would also be remiss of me to fail to note the very late hour that this bill – with this line item – passed each chamber on Wednesday, July 1: 3:41 a.m. in the House, and 4:12 a.m. in the Senate. From June 30 to July 1 of this year, several bills traveled between the chambers at a pace and at a time where the public could not keep up. Bills were drafted, introduced, amended, and passed without enough scrutiny by stakeholders.

I want to be clear. House Bill 500 makes crucial investments in schools, affordable housing, roads, clean water initiatives, parks, agriculture, and libraries. This should be celebrated. The Joint Capital Improvement Committee has done tremendous work crafting this spending package, but given the aforementioned reasons, I cannot support commencing a \$116 million government office expansion.

For the reasons set forth above, I am hereby line-item vetoing the \$35 million appropriation for the Legislative Hall Expansion Project in House Bill No. 500 by returning it to the State House.

Sincerely,



Matthew Meyer  
Governor

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that law. In doing so, he must approve or disapprove it as a whole for he has no constitutional power to alter the content of a proposed law submitted to him, except as to appropriations of money” which he may veto by line item).

<sup>7</sup> Randy J. Holland, *The Delaware State Constitution* 145 (2d ed. 2017).