

EARL L. "BUDDY" CARTER
FIRST DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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THE BUDGET

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May 3, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting funding for the Savannah Convention Center Capital Improvements project in fiscal year 2025. The entity to receive funding for this project is the Savannah-Georgia Convention Center Authority, located at One International Drive, Savannah, GA 31402.

The funding would be used for Savannah Convention Center Capital Improvements that would replace the original escalators, including one that is currently not operational, that are 25 years old.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds because the Savannah Convention Center is one of the primary economic engines of Coastal Georgia and economic opportunity throughout the state. With approximately 160 events per year and attracting more than 200,000 people to Savannah, this state-of-the-art, world-class facility has generated \$1.4 billion in statewide economic impact, contributes \$13.5 million annually in state and local taxes, and supports 28,000 tourism and hospitality jobs in the greater Savannah area. In Chatham County, the 2023 economic impact totaled \$201 million and supported 2,126 jobs. In Georgia, the 2023 economic impact totaled \$187.7 million and supported 1,689 jobs.

Since opening for operations in June 2000, the Savannah Convention Center has served as one of our nation's premiere meeting venues for major conferences, trade shows, athletic events, and competitive arts. In 2004, the Savannah Convention Center was selected as the media center for the historic 30th G8 Summit. The Savannah Convention Center has also served as a natural disaster site (partnering with FEMA and American Red Cross) to shelter thousands of Georgians and individuals from neighboring states, including during Hurricane Irma (2017) and Hurricane Matthew (2016).

The Savannah Convention Center plays a significant role in the community and state in terms of economic development, jobs, tourism, and supporting local businesses. Tourism is a staple of Georgia's economy and workforce, generating \$63 billion in annual economic impact to the state and supporting 460,000 jobs. Every year, more than 14 million visitors from across Georgia, the United States, and, indeed the world travel to Savannah. With the 361,000 square foot expansion, the Convention Center has seen a significant increase for conferences, meetings, and events and will serve a destination venue for organizations globally.

In order for the Savannah Convention Center to remain competitive as a world-class destination venue, this 25-year-old facility has nearly \$100 million in capital improvement needs. Replacing the escalators would contribute to those improvements and provide increased access to the Convention Center.

The project has a Federal nexus because the funding provided is consistent with purposes authorized in 42 U.S.C. 5305(a)(2), 5305(a)(4), and 5305(a)(5).

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,



Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress