

## GUIDELINES FOR MEMBER-LED TOURS INTO THE CAPITOL DOME

### GENERAL

- **Member Must Accompany Group** – Members are responsible for their guests and must accompany them during the entire tour.
- **Availability** – Dome tours are available to Members of Congress only and are conducted by US Capitol Visitor Center Guides
- **Hours of Operation** – Tours are available Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Tours last between 45-60 minutes. One (1) tour per hour is available.
- **Group Size** – To ensure that a safe evacuation is possible, group size is limited to the Guide, the Member, **plus a maximum of seven (7) guests.**
- **Scheduling** – To request a tour, please call Visitor Services at (202) 593-1762. Requests may be made up to sixty (60) days in advance and are processed in the order in which they are received on a space available basis.
- **Severe Weather** – Weather-permitting, the Guide will take Dome Tour groups to the balcony beneath the Statue of Freedom. However, during periods of severe weather (i.e., thunderstorms, lightning, snow, and high wind), the Guide will conduct a Dome Tour of the internal space only.
- **Where to Meet for the Tour** – The Member should bring the tour group to the Crypt of the Capitol and meet the Guide at the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services, which is located in the Crypt (room S-156).
- **Waiver Forms** – Signed waiver forms must be given to the Guide prior to the beginning of the tour.
- **Children** – Children may participate in Dome Tours, but, due to the nature of the tour route, the tour is not recommended for children under the age of 10.

### TOUR SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The tour route includes approximately 300 stairs to reach the top of the Dome. Please be aware that these steps consist of a series of straight, steep, narrow, spiral, curved, and irregularly spaced landings and stairs. Dome Tour participants must be able to have both hands free to utilize hand rails.
- Pay close attention to your immediate surroundings. Due to the geometry of the Dome's structure, numerous head hazards will be encountered throughout the tour route.
- Due to its physical challenges and hazards:
  - The Office of the Attending Physician advises that persons with heart, back, neck, knee, acrophobia (a fear of heights), or breathing problems, as well as those with difficulty in bending or with a disability that may prevent them from walking unaided (cane, walker, etc.), should not participate in the tour.
  - The tour is not recommended for children under the age of 10. Children may not be carried on the Dome Tour. Parents or guardians must be able to have both hands free.
- Dress accordingly. Flat, closed-toe, non-slipping shoes should be worn; no high-heeled shoes will be allowed. In addition, the temperature inside the Dome's two shells is not controlled. Therefore, extremely hot or cold temperatures may be experienced, depending on the outside weather conditions.
- Large purses, briefcases, and/or backpacks may not be taken on the tour. Since storage facilities are not available in the Capitol, Members should make arrangements to safeguard these items in their offices.
- No rest areas, seats, or rest rooms are available on the tour route.

## INFORMATION FOR GUESTS PARTICIPATING IN CAPITOL DOME TOURS

The Dome of the United States Capitol was constructed in the early 1860s following the completion of the current House and Senate extensions. The Dome is comprised of vertical cast iron ribs covered both inside and out with cast iron plates with a combined weight of approximately nine million pounds. The Dome is composed of two layers – an outer shell visible from outside the Capitol and an inner shell visible from inside the Rotunda. It is this inner space between the inner and outer shells – the interstitial space – that provides access to the top of the Dome. A climb of nearly 300 steps through the interstitial space is required to reach the observation balcony beneath the Statue of Freedom. Weather permitting; the Capitol Guide will take your group outside on this balcony. Each tour lasts between 45 – 60 minutes.

### Tour Safety Recommendations

- The tour route includes approximately 300 stairs to reach the top of the Dome. Please be aware that these steps consist of a series of straight, steep, narrow, spiral, curved, and irregularly spaced landings and stairs. Flat, closed-toe, non-slipping shoes should be worn; no large-heeled shoes will be allowed. No rest areas, seats, or rest rooms are available on the tour route.
- Pay close attention to your immediate surroundings. Due to the geometry of the Dome's structure, numerous head hazards will be encountered throughout the tour route.
- Dress accordingly. Since the temperature inside the Dome's two shells is not controlled, extremely hot or cold temperatures may be experienced, depending on the outside weather conditions.
- Due to its physical challenges and hazards, the tour is not recommended for small children. Additionally, the Office of the Attending Physician advises that persons with heart, back, neck, knee, acrophobia (a fear of heights), or breathing problems, as well as those with difficulty in bending or with a disability that may prevent them from walking unaided (cane, walker, etc.), should not participate in the tour.
- Large purses, briefcases, and/or backpacks may not be taken on the tour. Since storage facilities are not available in the Capitol, Members should make arrangements to safeguard these items in their offices.

*Before your tour of the Capitol Dome, you must sign the waiver form found below and give it to your tour guide. Thank you for your assistance and enjoy your visit!*

## UNDERSTANDING OF CAPITOL DOME TOUR RISKS WAIVER OF CLAIMS AND RELEASE

By signing below, the Capitol Dome guests hereby agrees:

- 1) That he/she has read and will comply with the Dome Tour Notification indicated above; and
- 2) To accept and to assume all Capitol Dome tour risks; and
- 3) To waive any cause of action for any injury arising from the Capitol Dome tour; and
- 4) To release the United States from any liability for damages related to the Capitol Dome tour.

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*Signature- Capitol Dome Guest*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Member's Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed Name of Guest*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*