Virtual Snapshot Series

The Executive State House
The State House

The New Jersey State House was constructed in 1792. It is the third oldest capitol building in the country. Since its construction, the building has been significantly expanded. Throughout its history, it has been home to all three branches of government: the Legislative Branch, the Judicial Branch, and the Executive Branch.

Today, the front portion of the building is known as the Executive State House. It includes the dome, rotunda, Executive Branch offices, and the governor’s office. In 2017, the Executive State House closed for restoration. Let’s take a peek into what this area has looked like throughout history.
The Dome

In American culture, domes are symbols of gathering places, representative government, and democratic ideals. Thirty-nine of the 50 state capitol buildings in the United States have domes.

The State House has had two domes in its history. The first dome was completed in 1846, but only survived 39 years before being severely damaged in a fire on March 21, 1885.
It’s Golden!

The second State House dome was built in 1889 and still exists. It is topped by a cupola, similar to the original State House bell tower, and is covered in gold.

A 1999 restoration of the dome used approximately 48,000 sheets of thin, 23.5 karat gold leaf imported from Florence, Italy. Each 6” x 6” sheet of gold cost $1.00. The $48,000 cost of restoration was raised by New Jersey school children.

If melted, the gold would be the size of a chocolate bar and weigh about 30 ounces, or just under two pounds.
Rotunda

The word rotunda means “round room.” In the State House, the rotunda is located directly beneath the dome and is used as a grand entryway.

Within the rotunda there are paintings, stained glass windows, and statues that represent important figures and symbols of the state and nation.
Looking Up

The rotunda is one of the largest spaces in the State House. This lofty space is meant to inspire big ideas. It is 45 feet in diameter (wall to wall). That’s big enough to fit two and a half school buses together bumper to bumper.

The underside of the dome is 105 feet overhead. If you were to stack school buses one on top of the other from the floor to the ceiling, you would need ten buses to reach the top!
The Office of the Governor

The head of the Executive Branch is the governor. The Executive Branch enforces the laws created by the Legislative Branch. In New Jersey, governors serve four-year terms and may not be in office for more than two terms without interruption. They can serve a third term, but only after taking a four-year break from the position.

At the State House, the governor holds cabinet meetings, consultations, and staff meetings around a large table in a private office.
Since 1871, governors have used the reception room to receive guests and dignitaries, hold bill-signing ceremonies, and conduct press conferences.

The reception room typically features the portraits of the most recent governors to hold the position.
From Governor to President

Governor Woodrow Wilson was the only New Jersey governor to become President of the United States. He is pictured here, on the far right, sitting at his desk in the governor’s office.
Where’s the Governor?

When the restoration of the Executive State House began in 2017, the governor’s office was relocated to 225 West State Street in Trenton. The Executive Branch will return to the Executive State House at the conclusion of the restoration project.