

Report of the Subcommittee on Signage to the Capitol Preservation Committee

CHAIRPERSON: Senator Elaine Bowers

OTHER MEMBERS: Representative Borjon, Joe Brentano, Frank Burnam, Anthony Hensley, and Curtis Young

STUDY TOPIC

Installation of signage for the Felten statues (“Four Kansans”) on the second-floor rotunda of the Kansas Statehouse.

April 2024

Subcommittee on Signage

REPORT

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Subcommittee on Signage makes the following conclusions:

- Additional signage for the artist of the Four Kansans statues is needed;
- The city of Hays is willing to pay for the cost of the signage; and
- The city of Hays is willing to work with the Department of Administration on the signage.

BACKGROUND

The Capitol Preservation Committee met on October 24, 2023. During the meeting, Senator Bowers discussed a request from Representative Wasinger, whose constituent communicated the need for additional signage by the Felten statues (“Four Kansans”) on the second-floor rotunda of the Statehouse.

The Committee approved the creation of a subcommittee to meet during the 2024 Legislative Session to discuss the request. Subcommittee members included Senator Bowers (chairperson), Representative Borjon, Joe Brentano, Frank Burnam, Anthony Hensley, and Curtis Young.

SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Subcommittee met on February 20, 2024, at the Statehouse.

Melissa Dixon, Director, Convention and Visitors Bureau, city of Hays, stated that she asked about the artist of the Four Kansans while on a tour of the Statehouse, but the tour guide could not provide that information. Upon finding the artist was a native of the city of Hays, Ms. Dixon communicated the lack of signage to Representative Wasinger, who contacted members of the Committee to discuss the possibility of additional signage regarding the artist.

History of the Artist

Peter F. “Fritz” Felten Jr. (1933-) is a native of Hays, Kansas. According to 2023 HR 6024, which was passed by the House of Representatives in honor of Mr. Felten’s birthday, Mr. Felten served in the U.S. Navy from 1952 to 1956, and he was able to visit museums throughout the country and identify his passion for sculpture.

Mr. Felten found inspiration in Kansas limestone and has sculpted numerous notable works that reside in Kansas, including the top 10 works identified by the Kansas Sampler Foundation, who selected Mr. Felten as a finalist of the “8 Wonders of Kansas Art”:

- Monarch of the Plains, Hays;
- Lawman, Hays;
- Pioneer Family, Oberlin;
- Buffalo, Atwood;
- Volga Germans, Victoria;
- Four Kansans, Statehouse, Topeka;
- Draft Horse, Stockton;

- Prairie Dog, Norton;
- Library, Ness City;
- Pioneer Students, Fort Hays State University;
- Eagle, WaKeeney; and
- Panther, Protection.

History of Four Kansans

According to the Kansas State Historical Society, Mr. Felten selected limestone from the southern part of the state for the statues in the second-floor rotunda of the Statehouse. His subjects are four famous Kansans who contributed to the enrichment of the state, the country, and even the world. Installed in 1981, each sculpture weighs about 2,000 pounds. The Four Kansans are:

- Arthur Capper
- Amelia Earhart;
- Dwight David Eisenhower; and
- William Allen White.

Subcommittee Discussion

Ms. Dixon detailed that a sign regarding each statue's identity is placed on the right side of the statues. She proposed a similar sign be placed on the opposite side of each statue, in the same form, that details Mr. Felten's biography.

It was discussed the signage would measure 3 inches by 14.25 inches, and would be in the same material and likeness as the existing signage.

Ms. Dixon noted the city of Hays has volunteered to pay for the cost of the signage.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Subcommittee concludes that:

- Additional signage for the artist of the Four Kansans statues is needed;
- The city of Hays is willing to pay for the cost of the signage; and
- The city of Hays is willing to work with the Department of Administration on the signage.