Office of Senate Curator
Conservation of 1819 Thomas Constantine Senate Chamber Chair
RFP: 2026-R-002
June 4, 2026

A. Project Description

The Office of Senate Curator (hereinafter referred to as "the Curator"), on behalf of the U.S. Senate Commission on Art, seeks qualified conservation services to assess the condition and perform all necessary conservation treatment on the following object in the U.S. Senate Collection:

> *Chair, Senate Chamber*, 1819 ca.
> Maker: T. Constantine & Co.
> Mahogany, mahogany veneer, maple, brass, leather
> Dimensions: 36.75" (H) x 23.25" (W) x 25.75" (D)
> U.S. Senate Collection, 65.00106.000

Description: Side chair that demonstrates evidence of the previous presence of arms, indicating modification of the original structure. Curved back with stuffed black leather inset; removable slip seat that is over-stuffed with horsehair and covered with black leather. The existing show cover is believed to be second generation, but the wooden slip seat may date to 1819. The front legs are reeded and tapered and the rear legs are flared. The chair originally had casters which were replaced with round metal Bassick glides on each foot at an unknown date.

The trapezoid-shaped slip seat is covered with black vegetable-tanned leather and stuffed with curled horsehair. The leather is dry, brittle, and degraded. The slip seat has several tears and losses, including a large section along the front portion of the seat top and corners. The seat is dusty with speckles of an undetermined white material.

B. Background

The Senate Collection is supervised and overseen by the U.S. Senate Commission on Art (hereinafter referred to as "the Commission") and managed and maintained by the Curator. The Senate's collection of historic furnishings consists of objects commissioned, acquired, displayed, and used by the Senate.

In 1819 the Senate acquired 48 armchairs from New York cabinetmaker Thomas Constantine for its legislative chamber. Constantine's chairs were made of mahogany, upholstered in red Morocco leather, and carved with reeded legs, a sunburst motif at the end of the backrest, and distinctive supports for the armrests, embellished with volutes and a pineapple pattern. The red leather chairs were gradually retired from use starting in the late 1800s. Today, only three of the 1819 chairs are known to exist, and the Senate's chair is the only one in a public institution. The current senators' chairs are made by the U.S. Senate Sergeant at Arms Cabinet Shop and reflect Constantine's original design.

The Senate's chair has been modified from its original appearance, most notably in the removal of the arms, replacement and reupholstery of the seat back and slip seat, and replacement of the original casters with glides. These alterations presumably occurred during the time the chair was not in the possession of the U.S. Senate, but this is not yet known with certainty. The chair contains several markings, including chalk marks and a fragment of an original T. Constantine label, as well as the names of three Senators who may have used the chair during their tenures: Asher Robbins (1825-1838), Samuel Slater Phelps (1839-1851, 1853-1854), and Edward Allen Hannegan (1843-1849).

From 2019 to 2021, the Curator partnered with the Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation to undertake a technical study of the Senate's chair. During the study period, conservators at Winterthur cleaned the wooden surfaces of the Senate's chair to remove dirt and grime and to reveal finish. The technical study included testing and analysis of the finish, casters, construction techniques, and materials that make up the chair, as well as a comparative evaluation with the two (2) other extant 1819 Senate Chamber chairs. Molds were taken from original casters and arms from one of the extant 1819 chairs, and comparative measurements, tracings, and photography were completed for all three extant chairs. All information resulting from the study and any relevant historical information identified by the Senate will be made available to the selected Contractor.

Since there are so few original 1819 chairs in existence, and the Senate's chair has been significantly modified over its life, consultation with advisors and experts outside of the Senate is considered an important aspect of the project. To facilitate this, the Curator has assembled a small advisory committee to assist with making final decisions about the future use of the chair and the extent of the treatment. The selected Contractor will be expected to participate in virtual discussions and possibly one in-person visit at the Capitol to review treatment recommendations with the advisory committee.

The Senate is interested in using the conservation treatment as an opportunity to compile as much technical and historical information about the chair as possible, and to include that information as part of the treatment report noted in Section D.9.

Following completion of the conservation, the Senate intends to place the chair on long-term exhibition in the Capitol Visitor Center's Exhibition Hall where it will be displayed with an 1818 Constantine chair made for the U.S. House of Representatives Chamber.

The Senate will arrange separately for all packing and shipping of the chair between the U.S. Capitol and the Contractor's studio. All logistics for shipping will be coordinated with the Contractor.

C. Requirements

1. The Contractor shall provide qualified conservation services, along with all tools, materials, and studio space required for the performance of the Contract.
2. The Contractor shall be a conservation firm specializing in the treatment of 19th- and 20th-century American furniture. The firm, or its principal, shall demonstrate continuous

operation or experience for a minimum of five (5) years, and be able to provide relevant and bona fide past performance references to the work listed herein.

3. The Contractor shall be available to complete all deliverables before March 31, 2027.
4. The Contactor shall submit a Certificate of Insurance for a fine arts policy naming the U.S. Senate Commission on Art as additionally insured for $75,000.
5. All work shall be consistent with the letter and spirit of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practices (see Attachment H.4). Treatment should, to the greatest extent possible, preserve the original materials, surfaces, and conditions that result from age and use. When new materials are required as part of a treatment, they should be isolated from original materials, remove as little original material as possible, and be reversible in a manner that is non-destructive to the original material.
6. When developing treatment proposals or time estimates, the Contractor shall abide by the curatorial preferences guiding conservation that are identified in the Office of Senate Curator Expectations for Conservation Treatment Proposals (see Attachment H.5).
7. All reports and documentation shall abide by the technical requirements and file-naming protocols as stated in the U.S. Senate Commission on Art Guidelines for Conservation Reports and Photo Documentation (see Attachment H.6)

D. Scope of Work

The Contractor shall provide all necessary project management, administration, and conservation services associated with the following tasks:

1. Project Preparation
    a. Review all related documentation provided by the Senate, including condition reports, treatment reports, photographs, technical analyses, and materials resulting from the Winterthur study.
    b. Participate in a virtual kickoff meeting with the COR to review treatment options and finalize the project schedule.
    c. Work with the COR to develop and coordinate a shipment and treatment schedule for the project. Final dates will be coordinated between the Senate, the Contractor, and the Senate-contracted art handler.
    d. Upon delivery, receive, unpack, and inspect the chair with the art handler and, if needed, update the shipment condition report provided by the Senate. The Contractor shall notify the COR of any changes in condition that may have occurred during shipment.

2. Condition Assessment of the Chair:
    a. Upon receipt of the chair, assess the wooden elements with particular emphasis on the structural integrity, the condition of the finish and coatings, associated attachments, and any observed losses.
    b. Assess the upholstered back and slip seat with particular emphasis on the structural integrity, condition of the leather and horsehair, and existing losses.

3. Project Plan: Upon receipt of the chair and completion of the condition assessment, develop and submit for Curator approval a project plan and provide a minimum of two (2) treatment scenarios and associated recommendations for remediating all concerns observed during

the assessments and those listed herein, including a list of any special considerations. Treatment scenarios should include the minimum treatment required to stabilize the chair and address general condition and/or finish concerns, and a more comprehensive treatment to restore the chair as closely as possible to its 1819 appearance. Execution of any recommended treatments shall be performed only following approval of the Curator.

The Project Plan should elaborate on or denote changes to any recommendations made in the Contractor's original proposal, and shall include:

a. Infrared photography, microscopy, and x-radiography of the chair or its component parts, as well as recommendations for any additional technical analyses that should be undertaken. See also Sections D.5 and D.6 for more details
b. A minimum of two treatment scenarios and associated recommendations to address the wooden elements of the chair, that may include but are not limited to: additional cleaning, finish work, and repairs.
c. A minimum of two treatment scenarios and associated recommendations to address the upholstered slip seat and seat back, that may include but are not limited to:
    i. Stabilization of the existing slip seat and seat back (required);
    ii. Investigation of the slip seat and inside and outside of the seat back, including feasibility of removing the upholstery, and a detailed plan for doing so, if recommended;
    iii. Cleaning, mending, or stabilizing tears;
    iv. Treatment or intervention options that will still allow access to the interior of the slip seat for future research or study;
    v. Fabricating and upholstering a new slip seat and/or seat back for historical accuracy;
    vi. Recommendations for a non-intrusive means of possibly covering the seat back in red leather to demonstrate historical accuracy.
d. Proposed plan and recommendations for acquiring and/or fabricating and attaching replica arms and casters (see also Section D.4).

4. Arms and Casters: The Curator is interested in having replicas of the original casters and arms created for use when the chair is on display or used during educational programs. As a part of the Winterthur study, molds were taken from original casters and arms from another 1819 chair; the molds will be made available to the selected Contractor. If subcontractors are required to complete any of the tasks listed below, the Contractor will be responsible for identifying the firm(s) (see also Section I.2.C).

    a. For the casters, this task involves creation of the waxes and allied components, metal finishing of the casters, and fitting and mounting all components on the chair. This shall include information/options for a proposed vendor who will supply the casters, and the associated costs and schedule for obtaining samples (if applicable) for review, and fabrication of the casters following Curator approval. The Contractor shall supply the final approved casters, and at the completion of the project, will also provide an additional stock of four of the final approved casters to the Curator. This stock will provide one replacement for every caster installed.
    b. For the arms, which may be carved or fabricated by some other means than carving, the method of fabrication and attachment must be recommended by the Contractor

and approved by the Curator. This task may also involve determining a non-intrusive method for temporarily attaching the arms to the chair without damaging the original wooden surfaces. The Contractor should include drawings or images, dimensions, proposed materials, and a prototype for review and approval by the Curator.

5. Finish Samples and Analysis: The Contractor shall conduct finish sampling and analysis to help identify the presence of original/early finishes and compile a finish history for the chair. The Contractor shall recommend the type of analysis and quantity of samples from the chair that would be required to document the history of the chair.

6. X-radiography: The Contractor shall take x-rays of the chair through a subcontract with the Senate's preferred vendor, Mas Imaging Portable Radiology.

    a. X-rays shall be taken using the subcontractor's portable x-ray machine at the Contractor's studio so that the chair does not need to be taken to another location.
    b. The x-ray images will be provided to the Contractor in an agreed-upon format with the subcontractor that allows for manipulation and as individual JPG files. The Contractor will be responsible for obtaining any software that may be necessary to view the files.
    c. The Contractor will review the x-ray images and submit a summary report that denotes the joinery and construction of the chair, and any notable technical elements or structural concerns. Copies of all JPG images of the x-rays, with the least compression possible, shall be provided per Section D.9.

7. <u>Treatment</u>: After receiving the Curator's final approval for the recommendations outlined in the submitted project plan, complete Curator-approved conservation treatment of the chair.

8. <u>Site Visits and Project Meetings</u>: Allow for up to four (4) site visits at the Contractor's studio and regular teleconference meetings with Curator staff to discuss treatment options and review progress, according to a schedule agreed to by both the Contractor and the Curator. The Contractor may also be asked to participate in an onsite visit at the Capitol, and/or a videoconference with Curator staff and members of the advisory committee described in Section B.

9. <u>Documentation</u>:
    a. Treatment Report: Provide a treatment report, supported by photographs and graphics, as necessary, that documents all performed testing, analysis, assessment, and treatment, including the methods and materials used. The report should also include a detailed summary of the process for creating the replica arms and casters, and recommendations for future treatment and maintenance of the chair and component parts. The treatment report shall also synthesize the technical and historical information revealed during the documentation and treatment phases of the project and include analysis from the x-rays. Provide the report in draft form, and incorporate Curator edits into the final report, which shall be submitted as a PDF file (see Attachment H.5).

b. Photographs and X-rays: Take photographs before, during, and post treatment (overall and condition details) for all elements, as well as the process for creating reproduction casters and arms. Photographs should detail the work completed and record any unusual conditions discovered during the treatment. The Senate is also interested in working with the Contractor to obtain video documentation of certain aspects of the work being undertaken. Photos and x-ray images shall be submitted through the Senate's Large File Transfer System (LFTS) as individual JPG files in a zipped file, even if they are embedded in the treatment report. The Contractor shall review Senate protocols prior to naming the image files to ensure compatibility with existing Curator files (see Attachment H.6).
c. Inscriptions, Markings, Numbers: Confirm all inscriptions, markings, and numbers noted in the documentation provided by the Curator after the award of the Contract. Any inscriptions, markings, or numbers not previously recorded, that are discovered either by visual inspection or through additional technical analysis, such as infrared photography, shall be documented as part of the treatment report and photographs.
d. Finish Samples and Analysis: As applicable, and as part of the treatment report, the Contractor shall include a summary report of the finish analysis, documenting the results of the samples and the locations where each sample was taken. All finish samples shall be mounted, labeled, and returned to the COR.

E. Period of Performance

The period of performance will be from the date of award through June 30, 2027.

F. Deliverable Schedule

The Contractor shall prepare and provide the following deliverables as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Deliverable Schedule

Title	Due Date
Condition Assessment (D.2)	Three (3) weeks after receipt of chair
Project Plan (D. 3)	TBD
Finish Samples (D.5)	TBD
X-radiography (D.6)	TBD
Conservation Treatment (D.7)	TBD
Draft Treatment Report (D.9.A)	Two (2) weeks after treatment is complete
Final Treatment Report (D.9.A) and Photographs (D.9.B)	Two (2) weeks after Curator comments on the draft report

G. Place of Performance

All work to be completed under this RFP shall be at the Contractor's studio or Senate facilities, unless written authorization is obtained in advance from the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR).

H. Attachments

1. U.S. Senate Collection Art & Artifacts, *Chair, Senate Chamber*, 1819 ca.
2. 1819 Senate Chamber Chair and Associated Elements: Photographs
3. 1819 Senate Chamber Chair: Treatment Report, 2021
4. American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice
5. Office of Senate Curator Expectations for Conservation Treatment Proposal
6. U.S. Senate Commission on Art Guidelines for Conservation Reports and Photo Documentation
7. Draft Service Contract, 2025

I. Proposed Schedule and Deliverables

1. Questions on this Scope of Work will be accepted until June 26, 2026, via email addressed to Holly_McDonald@saa.senate.gov. Responses will be provided and delivered via email no later than July 1, 2026. A *pre-proposal site visit* at the Senate may be requested and coordinated at a mutually agreeable time from June 10, 2026 - June 18, 2026.

2. Provide a proposal that addresses all tasks in the Scope of Work by Friday, July 10, 2026. Submit the proposal as a Word or PDF attachment in an e-mail to Holly_McDonald@saa.senate.gov. The following information must be included:

    a. A draft or preliminary project plan that includes a narrative description of the technical approach to performing the tasks outlined in the Scope of Work. The plan shall include a statement that describes the Contractor's approach to the overall project, addressing who will lead the project, any support staff who will work on the project, where work will occur, and any anticipated collaboration with subcontractors.
    b. When addressing conservation of the chair, including upholstery and replica components, the Contractor shall provide a proposed conservation treatment plan, which should include expectations for treatment, proposed approaches for treating the chair, and describe any additional technical analysis that might be needed as a part of the treatment process. The proposal should include a minimum of two treatment options, which are described in detail in Section D.3.
    c. Subcontractors: Apart from the Senate's preferred vendor for x-rays (Section D.6), the Contractor shall be responsible for identifying all subcontractors required to complete the tasks in the Scope of Work. The Contractor shall provide, as applicable, all associated treatment estimates provided by proposed subcontractors, which should include recommended approaches and descriptions of any additional technical analysis that may be needed as a part of their work. The Contractor will be responsible for identifying the firm(s) and providing all contract administration.
    d. A sequenced list of the project tasks that details project preparation, proposed staff, subcontractors (as applicable), hours, methods, materials, documentation,

and costs broken down by task. Include any testing or analysis recommended as part of the condition assessment.

e. Résumés for all individuals proposed for the project, including any proposed subcontractors.
f. An estimated time frame to complete the Scope of Work described in Section D.
g. Insurance: The Contractor shall submit a Certificate of Insurance for a fine arts policy naming the U.S. Senate Commission on Art as additionally insured for $75,000.

2. Provide a not-to-exceed total price for each task listed in the table below*. Identify the combined hourly rate for all proposed labor types and the estimated hours to complete all empty fields in the pricing table below. The following table shall contain the best estimates for providing the tasks and deliverables specified in Section D. ***Please note: the amounts proposed shall represent the Offeror's fully burdened labor costs for work performed on this project with all administrative, material, travel, and other direct costs, unless specifically identified and agreed upon by the Senate. The Senate will not pay for hours spent during travel, or separate costs of travel unless approved in advance in writing by the Senate; instead, the Contractor must account for, and include, any estimated travel or separate costs of travel, in their pricing***.

			All prices are shown in USD	
Description		**Labor Rate (Hourly)**	**Labor Hours**	**Total Price**
Project Preparation (D.1)				
Condition Assessment (D.2)				
Project Plan (D.3)				
Replica Casters (D.4)				
Replica Arms (D.4)				
Finish Samples and Analysis (D.5)				
X-Radiography (D.6)				
Treatment of Wooden Elements (D.7)	Treatment scenario #1			
	Treatment scenario #2			
	Additional treatment scenario (optional)			
Treatment of Upholstered Slip Seat & Seat Back (D.7)	Treatment scenario #1			
	Treatment scenario #2			
	Additional treatment scenario (optional)			
Site Visits and Project Meetings-Onsite (D.8)				
Site Visits and Project Meetings-Offsite (D.8)				
Documentation (D.9)				
		Total Not-to-Exceed Price:		