



Move Washington D.C. (and make it S.A.F.E.)

Analyzing the benefits of a more central location

WHAT?!

Four main reasons to MOVE DC: Security, Accessibility, Fairness, and Economics. These four problems need to be addressed to make Washington DC S.A.F.E.!

Moving the *business* of government out of the vulnerable and congested “Beltway” into the heartland will protect our government and provide better access to the rest of the country. Historic buildings like the White House and the Capitol can be managed by the National Park Service. Tourism will support the preservation of historic buildings, while some could be sold or repurposed.

Good reasons to move:

- A new capital would be more secure from natural disasters and human threats
- Access would be more fair and equal for citizens, legislators, and lobbyists
- New buildings would be more secure, efficient, sustainable and cost effective
- Future expansion needs would be easily addressed
- Returning DC to Maryland gives its citizens representation in Congress
- Midwest “fly-over” country would be a destination and get an economic boost
- Lobbyists, embassies and media interests would build new offices in the new location, helping provide the economic boost.
- Politicians would see more of the country, deal with the reality of Middle America and get out of the “beltway” mindset
- No more mixing up Washington State and DC. The new District of Columbia would be in the heartland (Kansas D.C. for example), and the old DC could be “Historic Washington National Park” (e.g.).

The basic plan:

Much of government business can be moved ahead of time. Many important agencies already have operations in the central states, like the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Treasury, EPA, DOJ, FBI, IRS and many more. Eventually, enough infrastructure will be in place to move Congress and the Presidential residence, although both existing buildings could still be used occasionally for ceremonial purposes. Although it may seem a daunting task, many large multi-national corporations have moved their headquarters as they grew.

Historically, many capitals relocated due to wars. The US capital was forced to move eight times during the revolutionary war period (1774 – 1785). These problems spurred the creation of the District of Columbia, which was founded on July 16, 1790.

Interesting historical note: a big reason Congress established the District of Columbia was because they could not count on the states to shelter them. “Nearly two years after the 1781 victory at Yorktown, the American government was once again forced to flee its regular home in Philadelphia—only this time it wasn’t the British threatening the delegates’ safety, but frustrated Continental Army soldiers demanding the back pay they had been promised (the Pennsylvania Mutiny). Delegates decided in the summer of 1783 to move 40 miles northeast

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to the campus of the College of New Jersey (now known as Princeton University)". "Pennsylvania's failure to protect United States institutions, was a primary reason why the framers of the Constitution decided to create a [federal district](#), distinct from the states, where Congress could provide for its own security".

<https://www.history.com/news/8-forgotten-capitals-of-the-united-states>

https://www.senate.gov/reference/reference_item/Nine_Capitals_of_the_United_States.htm

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania_Mutiny_of_1783

Examples in other countries:

"South Korea, Egypt, Indonesia, Equatorial Guinea and the British overseas territory of Montserrat's decision to move their capital cities were prompted by growing population, natural disasters and climate change instead of political or security concerns.

According to data compiled by Anadolu Agency, while only Montserrat's capital is a "ghost town" today, the capitals of the other four countries are home to a significant part of the respective countries' total population.

In the past, many countries such as Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Brazil, Malaysia, Nigeria and Myanmar changed their capitals due to political reasons.

The events of the past 50 years have shown that natural events, climate, and economic reasons as well as population growth lie behind the changes in the capital cities rather than political reasons." <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/africa/4-countries-move-capitals-amid-climate-population-issue>

"Examples abound from the past century or so — from Brazil, Pakistan and Nigeria to the more recent cases of Kazakhstan and Myanmar — and even more if we consider ongoing plans from [South Korea](#) to [Equatorial Guinea](#). The stated reasons are also familiar: The capital is too crowded and unlivable; the seat of government should be more centrally located; the change will draw people to a sparsely populated area. Yet cases like these could also involve less lofty goals: insulation from the pressures that large numbers of people place on governments." <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/09/12/moving-capital-cities-corruption/>

A good illustration of other seat-of-government relocations, and the most similar to the US proposal, is Brasilia, Brazil, inaugurated in 1960. Others include Abuja, Nigeria (1980's), Berlin, Germany (1990), and Moscow, Russia (1918).

Other capitals are even more transitory. In Japan, the home of the [Emperor](#) is traditionally considered the capital. From 794 through 1868, the Emperor lived in [Heian-kyō](#), modern-day [Kyoto](#).^{[4] [5]} After 1868, the seat of the [Government of Japan](#) and the location of the Emperor's home was moved to Tokyo. Transition continues.

"As of 2007, there is a movement to transfer the government functions of the capital from Tokyo while retaining Tokyo as the *de facto* capital, with the Gifu-Aichi region, the Mie-Kio region and other regions submitting bids for a *de jure* capital. Officially, the relocation is referred to as "capital *functions* relocation" instead of "capital relocation", or as "relocation of the [Diet](#) and other organizations".^{[10] [11]} in 2017, the [Government of Japan](#) decided to move the [Agency for Cultural Affairs](#) to Kyoto".



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bras%C3%ADlia>

<https://www.brazil.org.za/brazilia.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abuja>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_former_national_capitals

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_of_Japan

A brief history of Brazil's capital relocation

“From 1763 until 1960, [Rio de Janeiro](#) was 1Brazil's capital. At this time, resources tended to be centered in Brazil's southeast region near Rio de Janeiro and most of its population was concentrated near to the Atlantic Coast.^[9] Brasília's geographically central location fostered a more regionally neutral federal capital. An article of the country's first [republican constitution](#) dating back to 1891 stated the capital should be moved from Rio de Janeiro to a place close to the country's center.

The plan was conceived in 1827 by [José Bonifácio](#), an advisor to Emperor [Pedro I](#). He presented a plan to the [General Assembly of Brazil](#) for a new city called Brasília, with the idea of moving the capital westward from the heavily populated southeastern corridor. The bill was not enacted because Pedro I dissolved the Assembly.

In 1955 [Juscelino Kubitschek](#) was elected president of Brazil. Upon taking office in January, 1956, in response to his campaign pledge, he initiated the planning and construction of the new capital. **Brasília was built in 41 months, from 1956 to April 21, 1960, when it was officially inaugurated”.**

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Where ?

Close to the center of the country, like it was when the current Capital site was chosen in 1790 -- near the middle of the original 13 colonies.

The central states and federal government will have to determine the best location. Preliminary studies point to Kansas as the best site, with other possible locations in Nebraska or eastern Colorado. The high plains of the Oklahoma panhandle could also be considered. The federal government already owns 664,986 acres of land in Kansas, 738,182 acres in Nebraska and 24,233,954 acres in Colorado. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_lands

Some more historical perspective: In 1774, the Continental Congress was writing the new Constitution in the capital of Philadelphia. During the revolutionary war the capital had many homes. Keenly aware of the need for a permanent location, drafters of “the new Constitution - through [Article I, Section 8, Clause 17](#) - authorized Congress to create a [federal district](#) outside of the state structure as the nation's permanent seat of government, and granted Congress [exclusive governing jurisdiction](#) over it. The choice of a site was left for the new Congress to decide. The [United States Congress](#) was established in 1789, after ratification of the [United States Constitution](#), and New York City remained the temporary capital”.

In 1789 George Washington took the oath of office in New York City - the first capital of the United States after the Constitution was ratified. After much debate and compromise, the second session of the First United States Congress adopted the Residence Act, establishing the District of Columbia. It was signed into law July 16, 1790. Philadelphia was the capital again for ten years until the new District of Columbia was ready to occupy in 1802.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Residence_Act
<https://www.history.com/news/8-forgotten-capitals-of-the-united-states>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Washington,_D.C.

The geographic center of the 48 contiguous states is near [Lebanon, Kansas](#) (200 miles north of Dodge City, 10 miles from the Nebraska border). The federal government already owns 718 acres at nearby Fort Larned, and 34,000 acres at Smoky Hill Air National Guard (ANG) Range by Salina [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salina, Kansas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salina,_Kansas)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_center_of_the_contiguous_United_States
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon, Kansas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon,_Kansas)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_center_of_the_United_States
<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/smoky-hill.htm>

The geographic center of all 50 states is another 545 miles northeast, near [Belle Fourche, South Dakota](#), near the intersect with Wyoming and Montana. There is a lot of sparsely populated land out there. http://www.strategic-air-command.com/bases/Schilling_AFB.htm



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Why ?

Four main reasons: Security, Accessibility, Fairness, and Economics. These problems need to be addressed to make Washington DC S.A.F.E.!

Security: The current capital is very vulnerable due to its location, ageing infrastructure, and densely packed population. Coastal cities are easier to attack, and a cyber attack of power grids or violent weather can knock out the city (or the entire east coast, as in 2003). Drone technology has increased the risk of physical attack from offshore. Rising sea levels and hurricanes have already caused problems. Washington DC experienced ten severe floods in its history, and was threatened by a hurricane in 2018. Winter blizzards affect Washington on average once every four to six years.

<https://www.weatherbook.com/flood.html>

<https://dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-declares-state-emergency-ahead-hurricane-florence>

“Governments race to develop smaller, more intelligent, and ultimately wholly autonomous drones”. <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/inside-the-chilling-proliferation-of-artificially-intelligent-drones/>

“Maryland is susceptible to several extreme weather types including tropical storms and hurricanes, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, nor’easters, blizzards and ice storms, flooding, drought, and heat and cold waves... Since 1880, global sea level has risen by about 8 inches. The Chesapeake Bay area is the third most vulnerable area of the United States to sea level rise, behind Louisiana and South Florida... A recent study specific to Maryland produced best estimates of 1.4 feet rise by 2050 (range of 0.9 to 2.1 feet)...”

<https://statesummaries.ncics.org/chapter/md/>

“...prominent experts believe one of the most vulnerable targets” of hurricanes is Washington, D.C. A devastating storm could “paralyze many of the agencies that operate and defend the nation, raising the specter of national-security threats”

<https://www.history.com/news/worst-flood-washington-dc-world-war-ii-fdr>

Federal Triangle Flash Flood, June 25–26, 2006

“Several federal buildings, including the National Archives, portions of the Smithsonian Institution, and the IRS building, were flooded, and operations within those buildings impacted for a prolonged period. IRS employees did not begin returning to their headquarters until December”.

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/flood-states-dc>

Red Line train derails near Metro Center

“Metro’s investments to repair and maintain its aging infrastructure, called SafeTrack, were intended to prevent such major breakdowns, which [Rep. Gerry Connolly](#), who represents portions of Northern Virginia, called unacceptable in a statement”.

<https://wtop.com/local/2018/01/metro-derailment-farragut-north/slide/1/>

Washington DC imports 100% of its electricity, making it very vulnerable. “Long-distance energy transmission systems can have single points of failure—these include both extra high-voltage transmission substations and interstate natural gas pipelines. Overreliance

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on systems with single points of failure makes using large quantities of imported “just-in-time” energy a risky everyday practice—and also increases vulnerability to physical attack, cyber attack, solar storms, and electromagnetic pulse”.

<https://www.ferc.gov/CalendarFiles/20170717080647-Popik,%20Resilient%20Societies.pdf>

“An explosion at a power station Tuesday left the White House, the Capitol and the State Department briefly without electricity Tuesday as part of a widespread outage in Washington and its suburbs”.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/washington-d-c-including-white-house-hit-power-outages-reports-n337306>

Handling security at the hundreds of far-flung federal buildings is a daunting task.

“GSA should be using facility security assessment reports to ensure the protection of its buildings and its tenants. According to OMA and PBS management officials, PBS property managers should receive facility security assessment reports from FPS and review the reports to identify countermeasures and issues that can be corrected. However, we found that **GSA did not have the facility security assessment reports for most of the buildings we sampled**”. (12-4-2017)

https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/A160101_1.pdf

Accessibility:

The current capital is remote and distant from most of the population -- 98% live more than 100 miles away. This makes it difficult and expensive for citizens and their representatives to visit the seat of government to express themselves easily and effectively. The cost and time required for getting there, paying for hotels, meals and transportation is expensive. This skews accessibility against the poor and middle class.

If you do manage to visit Washington D.C., there are other obstacles; “traffic is terrible and the city is confusing as hell to drive in” ... “D.C. during the summer. It’s hot, muggy, and packed with tourists trying to squeeze in a vacation before their kids head back to school. If you can possibly avoid it, go during October or the early spring”.

https://www.destinationtips.com/advice/10-things-not-to-do-in-washington-dc/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=adwords&utm_content=Dont+Do+Washington+DC&utm_campaign=ADW001-DST-dontdos-us&mma=kwd-320525543434&gclid=EA1aIQobChMIm6S07NiC4gIV845bCh1GHgY5EAMYASAAEgJC6_D_BwE

Although Washington DC is one of the top-rated major cities for wheelchair access, it rates 45th overall in the US for people with disabilities when including other factors.

<https://www.insider.com/best-cities-us-wheelchair-accessible-travel-2018-5>

<https://wallethub.com/edu/best-worst-cities-for-people-with-disabilities/7164/>

The time zone is a factor too

The effects from jet lag are well known, but many people on the east coast have not had to experience the “red eye” midnight flights from the west coast – if you want to arrive in DC before noon to do business that day. And communicating by phone can be problematic. Capital offices are typically open 9 to 5 in the Eastern Time zone or 6 to 3 on the west coast. The new capital would be in either Central or Mountain time zone, inconveniencing both coasts nearly equally!

<https://www.statnews.com/2016/07/21/jet-lag-worse-east-west/>



Fairness:

When the District of Columbia was founded in 1790, it was near the center of the thirteen existing states, as long distance travel was very difficult, and it was a fair solution.

Even though transportation is much easier today, the current capital is not easy to access for most Americans. The cost of air fare from Los Angeles to DC is usually hundreds of dollars more than from Chicago or Atlanta. The trip is so long for many of our representatives that they choose to stay in DC rather than return home to their constituents.

And it is not sustainable – much of DC was laid out and built two centuries ago. Old, closely packed buildings, narrow streets, transportation problems and lack of space for future expansion are all problematic. Forget about draining the swamp – time to build on drier ground. (Although it is a myth that DC was built on a swamp).

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/draining-swamp-guide-outsiders-and-career-politicians-180962448/>

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/donald-trump-white-house-rats_n_5cb02626e4b098b9a2d172ea

Attempts to upgrade old buildings have had limited success, and at great cost.

“The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) provided GSA with \$3.2 billion for full and partial building modernizations to convert federal buildings into high-performance green buildings. Our audit objective was to determine whether buildings that received full or partial modernizations under the Recovery Act are meeting their minimum performance sustainability criteria.

We found that PBS did not always implement high-performance green building measures to meet the criteria, or have the ability to gauge the effectiveness of the measures that were implemented. Specifically, we reviewed seven minimum performance criteria across 15 Recovery Act full or partial modernization projects and found that **the projects did not meet 40 percent of the applicable minimum performance criteria**”.

GSA OIG Report Number A150026/P/R/R18003, September 21, 2018 (page 13)

“On February 12, 2018, GSA presented to Congress a revised plan for the FBI headquarters which recommended razing the existing headquarters facility in Washington, D.C., and constructing a new one on that site. This was a change from GSA’s previous plan to exchange that site as part of a deal to procure a campus facility outside the city. In subsequent hearings, committee leaders in both chambers of Congress publicly expressed significant, bipartisan concern about the revised plan”. (page 42)

<https://www.gsaig.gov/sites/default/files/semiannual-reports/GSA-OIG-SAR-11-2018.pdf>

Economics:

Many old capital buildings are not up to their task. Replacing them with new, highly secure, environmentally sustainable and self-sufficient buildings is a much better investment than repairing, maintaining and upgrading old buildings. Moving the capital to the central Midwest would also be a huge economic stimulus for the region.

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The DC metro area would surely experience some changes, but would likely remain economically viable given its enormous cultural and historic attractions. “The city is also one of the most visited cities in the world, with more than 20 million [tourists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington,_D.C.) annually”.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington,_D.C.

Turning historic buildings over to the National Park Service for preservation and tourism makes sense. “The [National Park Service](#) manages most of the 9,122 acres (36.92 km²) of city land owned by the U.S. government” in the Washington D.C. area. The General Services Administration can assess which assets could be sold or repurposed.

One suggestion is when a new (more secure) Pentagon is built in the Midwest, the existing Pentagon would make an ideal candidate for redevelopment as an affordable housing project, with commercial and nonprofit institutional cooperation.

Living in Washington D.C. is expensive too. It has the highest median income and fourth highest cost of living of the top 50 US cities – nearly 60% higher than the US average. Manhattan, Brooklyn and San Francisco lead the list (142%, 81% and 95% higher respectively).

<https://247wallst.com/special-report/2019/01/23/cost-of-living-in-americas-major-cities/>

And DC is crowded too. It ranks in the top twelve for population density of metro areas.
<http://www.usa.com/rank/us--population-density--metro-area-rank.htm>

Economic stimulus package to develop new capital:

Estimated cost \$1.8 Trillion

Funding: Treasury bonds

Debt ceiling: Keep raising it, or reform spending

How ?

As the great anthropologist Margaret Meade said, “*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has*”. As a nonpartisan, nonprofit endeavor to improve our country, this should appeal to people of all persuasions who believe in the American ideal of self-government in a responsible, reasonable and rational manner.

**Internet is the most important medium for influencing both citizens and legislators.
A good idea, presented well, can create consensus among us.**

Propose, promote, educate, instigate.

When ?

It can be done within a decade, with enough public support and political will. Many federal departments already have offices and operations in the central states. Some of them are the departments of Agriculture, Interior, Social Security, Treasury, EPA, IRS, DOJ, FBI, and HUD. The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) chose its Colorado Springs location in 1957. The nearby Cheyenne Mountain nuclear bunker has the Alternative Command Center.



The General Services Administration (Region 6) manages approximately 400 federally owned and leased buildings in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska.

<https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/regions/welcome-to-the-heartland-region-6/heartland-federal-buildings>

Brazil moved its capital in five short years, but that was a smaller project. Changes of this magnitude take years to plan, secure funding, and most importantly – create enough popular public support and political will to make it happen.

When popular and political wills converge on an idea (the Overton Window), the time has come to act. The deteriorating conditions, growing threats, mounting costs and lack of space are increasingly obvious. The basic fairness of better access for more citizens should be enough to tip the scales and make it happen.

Ultimately though, moving the Capitol into the heartland (and getting DC out from under the thumb of Congress) will take an act of Congress.

Who ?

Congress created the district and they would have to create a new district, with advice from the voters who put them in office – that means YOU!

Educating, organizing and growing a movement takes a lot of time and money. The Internet is obviously the most important medium to begin the endeavor (volunteers needed!). If it is a good idea and it is presented well, the sky is the limit.

The nonpartisan, nonprofit Move DC organization was founded to promote this goal by educating the public and government officials of its benefits. Originally outlined by Will Tyler White of Detroit, Michigan in 2005.

CONTACT: www.MoveDC.org, or Will Tyler White at 517-903-6040

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NOTES:

(the Constitution drafted to replace the Articles of Confederation was adopted and signed September 17, 1787. The ratification process for the Constitution began that day, and ended when the final state, Rhode Island, ratified it on May 29, 1790).

GSA Federal Lands Report, 1998: PLS\99PLSFinal\99pl1-3final.wpd