


Composting at the House of Representatives




Green the Capitol

"The House of Representatives must lead by example, and it is time for Congress to act on its own carbon footprint."
-Speaker Nancy Pelosi



GREEN THE CAPITOL
YEAR END REPORT
2008
CAO.HOUSE.GOV/GREENTHECAPITOL

A Letter from the Chief Administrative Officer



Eighteen months ago, when Speaker Nancy Pelosi directed implementation of her vision for a greener, more energy-efficient institution, we embarked on a formidable journey. That journey was filled with exploration, as we began the sometimes arduous process of determining the House's environmental impact and exactly what we could do, as an internationally recognized institution, to become more environmentally responsible.

We set ambitious carbon reduction goals for the 110th Congress. I am happy to report, in less than two years, we reached our goals, and reduced our carbon footprint by 74 percent.

This report will touch upon the major operational changes we made to reach our targets and then outline our priorities for the Green the Capitol program in the 111th Congress. However, before doing that, I

would like to share just a couple of lessons learned.

First and foremost: we learned a lot. For starters, there is no off-the-shelf product an organization of this size and stature can purchase to instantly become more energy-efficient and sustainable. The attainment of the Speaker's goals resulted in an invaluable amassing of know-how as we assessed our carbon footprint and undertook efforts to reduce it.

Like repeatedly practicing a new language, each project we effectively implemented increased our overall fluency in environmental stewardship. There was no playbook to green the House when we started, so we wrote our own.

Which brings me to my second lesson learned: good ideas. When good ideas come from passionate, talented people they tend to have a viral quality. The Speaker's Green the



Ban Plastics and Styrofoam



- All Plastic and Styrofoam[®] food service items have been replaced with fully compostable items

Changes

Created an additional waste stream for compostable material:

- Food service items
- Food waste from the kitchens and retail operations
- Compostable water bottles



Compostable Serviceware



Compostable Water Bottle



Compostable Station



Previous Food Service Waste Streams

- Landfill Waste
- Bottles and Cans
- Newspaper
- Cardboard

Current Food Service Waste Streams

- Compostable Material
- Bottles and Cans
- Landfill Waste
- Cardboard

Pulping



- Reduces weight by up to 66% by extracting water from the material
- Reduces volume of the waste stream up to 10 to 1
- The weight reductions combined with reduced tipping fees reduce costs

Composting



- After the material is pulped it is taken to Recycled Green in Woodbine Maryland
- The pulped material is composted in 90 days
- In 2008, we diverted 880 tons of waste away from landfills

Education

- Recycling Center Signage
- Plasma Screens
- Intranet
- Signage that Matches Building Themes



Results



“Today we say that the Capitol will be not just a shining symbol of our democracy, but a symbol of our commitment to the future. Not only by the power of our ideas on energy independence, but by the power of our example, we hope to send a message to the world and to the country.”

- Speaker Nancy Pelosi, June 21, 2007