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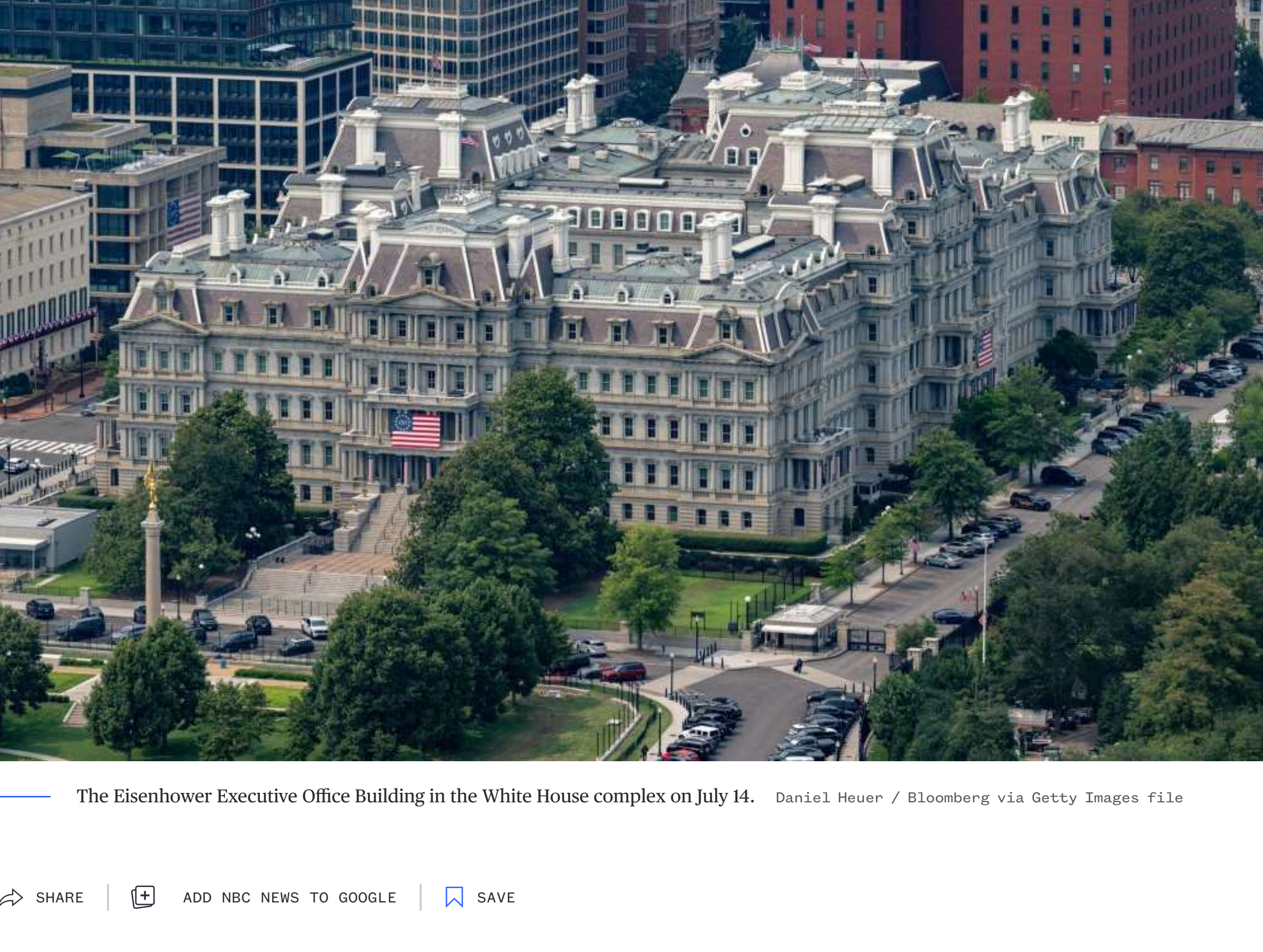
WHITE HOUSE

Preservationists seek to stop Trump from painting the Eisenhower Executive Office Building white

The EEOB has stood next to the White House since the 1870s. Preservationists are seeking an injunction to prevent what they say would be a damaging paint job.

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The Eisenhower Executive Office Building in the White House complex on July 14. Daniel Heuer / Bloomberg via Getty Images file

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By **Andrea Mitchell** and **Alexandra Bacallao**

WASHINGTON – Opponents of a Trump administration plan to paint the massive gray granite Eisenhower Executive Office Building right next door to the White House told NBC News they are seeking an injunction in federal court to stop the administration from proceeding with the project.

Preservationists say painting the building stark white, as President Donald Trump has proposed, not only would cost millions of dollars, but it would also have to be redone periodically, and it would cause irreversible damage to a building constructed next to the White House in the 1870s.



The EEOB's granite exterior would be damaged in the painting process, opponents say. Aaron Schwartz / Bloomberg via Getty Images file

Originally housing the departments of State, War and the Navy, it currently has offices for the vice president, presidential ceremonies, the National Security Council, the Council of Economic Advisers and other staff members who cannot fit into the relatively small West Wing.

Opponents first challenged the proposal in court in May 2025, after Trump revealed plans to paint the building white in an interview on Fox News.

At a hearing in U.S. District Court last year, the preservationists agreed to withdraw their request for an injunction after administration officials told the court the project was on the back burner. But last week, on July 20, the government filed a declaration by Heather Martin, deputy assistant to the president, saying the White House Office of Administration would start testing the building in preparation for painting.

In its filing, the Office of Administration said: “Given OA’s (Office of Administration) need to ascertain and treat existing causes of degradation to the EEOB’s façade, and the lack of reliable evidence concerning the potential effect of painting the granite building, OA contracted with a subject matter specialist in civil engineering and applied sciences (Building Consultant) to develop the Study. Additionally, the Building Consultant intends to hire an independent third-party reviewer to perform a peer review of the testing process and to ensure the scientific findings are accurate.”

That prompted the opponents to revive their plan to request an injunction in federal court. [The plaintiffs argue in that filing Friday that](#): “The President’s personal aesthetic preferences do not outweigh congressionally mandated procedures.”



President Donald Trump had a statue of Christopher Columbus installed outside the building in March. Jim Watson / AFP via Getty Images file

Gregory Werkheiser of Cultural Heritage Partners, the lead litigant, told NBC News his plaintiffs have 20 independent experts attesting to the risks of paint on the granite.

“Left unpainted, this building will last 1,000 years. Painted, we could be talking about having to replace essential parts of it within a generation,” Werkheiser said. “And, once painted, you have to keep painting it. So the cost to the taxpayers is recurring. It’s exorbitant, and there’s no reversing it.”

He added: “The federal government has said for 50 years we don’t paint historic granite because paint does not work on historic granite. It traps moisture. It causes the stone to fail. It weakens the building.”

Stephen Kelley, an architect and structural engineer, worked on the building after 9/11, from 2006 to 2011, hardening it to make sure it could withstand a future terrorist attack. He told NBC News the chief damage to the concrete would occur when chemicals are used to strip the initial paint off to repaint it.

Kelley said, “It’s a huge building, and to paint it every 20 years would be an enormous expense, and it would be better to take that enormous expense and use it to maintain the building the way that it is now because the granite is in pristine condition.”

How much would the paint job cost? Some critics say it could cost \$20 million to \$25 million, plus the expense of redoing it every few years to deal with wear and tear. And, they say, it would take so long to complete the project that scaffolding would have to be up in some sections at all times.



George Washington commissioned the original executive office building, according to the Library of Congress, but British troops burned it down, along with the White House, in 1814. The current building was started in 1871 and completed during the presidency of Grover Cleveland.

Pictures show that when the White House was unfenced in those years, President William Howard Taft’s pet cow pastured just outside the EEOB on what is now the North Lawn, providing milk for the first family. Before he was president, Theodore Roosevelt lived in the building as assistant secretary of the Navy in 1897. His cousin Franklin Delano Roosevelt held the same job – also in the building – decades later, before he ran for president.



The Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. J. David Ake / Getty Images

Historians say there are three or four buildings still standing in the U.S. designed in the same French architectural style popular at the time. More examples, including buildings that are part of the Louvre, can be seen throughout Paris.

The interior of the building was painted and modernized in the 1980s during the Reagan administration. President Bill Clinton renamed it for President Dwight D. Eisenhower because he had refused an effort to tear it down in 1957.

In addition to the cost, critics challenge the novel way the Trump administration plans to proceed by saying changes to the building can be ordered solely by the Office of the Presidency, without approval by other agencies, time for public comment or oversight by the General Services Administration.

In their filing for an injunction on Friday, opponents said that the EEOB painting project is part of a pattern of Trump running roughshod over federal procedures designed to protect historic sites.

“President Trump follows a familiar pattern,” they wrote. “He conceives of a project that he announces will improve a nationally beloved and historically significant resource. He directs those around him to execute his vision as quickly as possible. He disregards the strict federal standards Congress established to protect national, environmental, cultural, and historic resources. He misleads the public about both the harm his project will cause and the laws he is circumventing. And he rushes forward, irreparably damaging resources that do not belong to him.”

“The EEOB Project is among the most significant of these initiatives, because it proposes permanently damaging the exterior appearance of one of the Nation’s most recognizable NHLs,” or [National Historic Landmarks](#), they continued.

Werkheiser said the fight over the EEOB goes beyond even the other construction projects Trump has pursued.

“We might win or lose a battle over whether to protect a building from paint or protect the Reflecting Pool from paint or any of the other – or to protect the East Wing,” he said. “We win and we lose those battles over time, but the question of who has a voice in that process – is it just the most powerful person in the United States, or is it the American public who co-own these landmarks that define what it means to experience America? Obviously, we think it’s the latter.” 🗳️

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Andrea Mitchell
Andrea Mitchell is chief Washington correspondent and chief foreign affairs correspondent for NBC News.

Alexandra Bacallao