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State Capitol Access Procedures for Friday, March 4, 2011

MADISON – The Wisconsin State Capitol will open at 8:00 a.m. with revised entry procedures, limitations on carry-ins and a requirement that rallies remain on the ground floor, according to Wisconsin Department of Administration Secretary Mike Huebsch. A court order issued by Judge John Albert today in Dane County Circuit Court ordered Huebsch to remove individuals who have been illegally sleeping in the State Capitol and to increase access, while continuing to enforce the laws and rules that regulate use of the Capitol Building.

“DOA, the Capitol Police and the other agencies providing security at the Capitol made every effort to convince people who remained in the building illegally each night to leave voluntarily and I am pleased that they complied with the court order,” said Huebsch.

The last of the individuals who had been sleeping in the State Capitol - some since February 15 – voluntarily left the building shortly after 10:00 p.m. on Thursday. Huebsch said that with the building now empty at night, cleaning and maintenance schedules can return to normal while repairs and the removal of signs can begin.

While making his ruling, Judge Albert said that restrictions on access to the building this week were too strict, but that DOA should determine how many people can be safely in the building at one time. The judge also said that open access does not require DOA to allow people to sleep in the Capitol or to set up day care areas, medical stations or supply storage as visitors have done during the last 18 days.

“I told Judge Albert that once we were able to empty the building when it closes at night, DOA could begin to significantly relax the entry restrictions that were place this week,” said Huebsch. “I’m pleased that I am able to follow through with that pledge.”

Huebsch said that he believes open access combined with reasonable restrictions will balance the desire of some individuals to rally inside the Capitol with the needs of the hundreds of employees who work there. Beginning at 8:00 a.m. on Friday morning, the following procedures will be in place.

- Visitors to the Capitol must enter and exit at the North and South Hamilton doors. Employees who display their ID's may enter at the MLK entrance
- Members of the public can enter the Capitol for meetings, committee hearings, tours or other purposes.
- Members of the public participating in a rally or protest must remain in the ground floor rotunda area.
- Carry-ins including sleeping bags, mattresses, musical instruments or noisemakers, cooking appliances and other items prohibited by the administrative code will not be allowed in the building.
- Visitors are prohibited from affixing or removing signs taped inside the Capitol. The Capitol is a National Historic Landmark and removal of tape and the restoration of the building must be handled professionally. Retrieval of signs and other material left behind Thursday night will be made available to the public beginning next week.

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Capitol Police will post these procedures and a list of prohibited items at the North and South Hamilton entrances. Additional information is available on the DOA Capitol Access Information Blog at www.doa.state.wi.us.

Huebsch indicated that some of these procedures will change on Monday when DOA institutes a permanent plan for issuing permits to groups holding rallies and rules for conduct within the Capitol. Although he found existing entry requirements to be too strict, Judge Albert indicated that DOA and the Capitol Police had made a good faith effort to manage the massive crowds and address the problem of people remaining in the building overnight, while continuing to ensure that business at the State Capitol could continue. He said that the existing administrative code is constitutional and that DOA should enforce it.

“In order to ensure consistency and predictability going forward, DOA will enforce the provisions in the administrative code and establish policies and procedures that allow rallies at the Capitol that do not endanger public health or safety,” said Huebsch.

The State Capitol will close at 6:00 p.m. on Friday. Weekend hours are 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.