

# Stately makeover

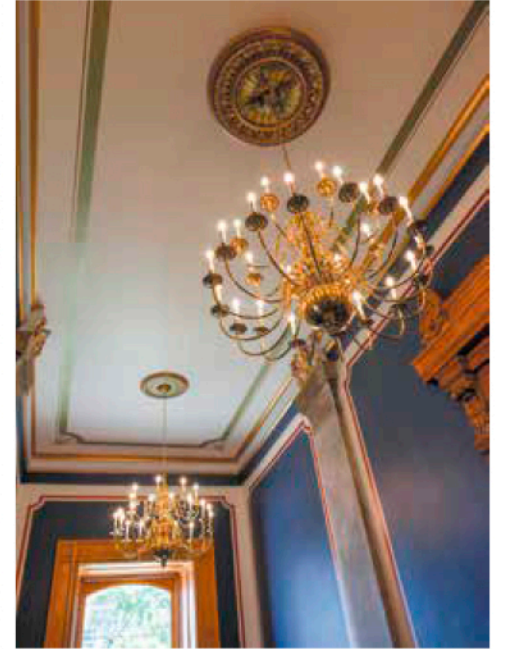
AG's Statehouse office rehab comes with inmates' efforts and frugal finds

The restoration of the Indiana Attorney General's office, left, came after decades of neglect, as witnessed by damaged floors and walls, right. The makeover's mission was design on a dime, and bargain-hunting staffers scored seven salvaged chandeliers, below right, from a closed cafeteria.



Photo courtesy of Indiana Attorney General's office

IL Photos/Eric Learned



By Dave Stafford  
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You've probably heard the stories of lavish spending sprees for government offices. You probably haven't heard of seven ornate Statehouse chandeliers purchased for \$75 to \$100 apiece.

"We really wanted to go back to the original chandeliers," Attorney General Curtis Hill said, talking about his office's long-delayed renovation.

But sticker prices of \$5,000 per fixture and upward made that seem extravagant.

"I put the staff on a mission to see what they could find used and in very good shape, and we were very fortunate to come across these," he said of the gold-plated fixtures salvaged from the now-closed Jonathan Byrd's Cafeteria in Greenwood.

The former eatery's chandeliers almost seem made to order, Hill said. "It's a happy coincidence."

Hill last week announced the completion of a thrifty renovation of the AG's office that began last year and included woodwork done by inmates from the Pendleton Correctional Facility and other rehab work done by prisoners from other Department of Correction facilities.

Pendleton inmates who participate in a DOC wood craftsmanship program built and installed heavy oak doors to replicate earlier ones that had been removed, likely cannibalized for another state office.

About \$335,000 was spent on the overall renovation, according to Hill's office. And while the work was paid for without tax dollars by using proceeds from the Consumer Settlement Fund, the AG said the mission of the makeover remained bringing it in at the lowest possible cost.

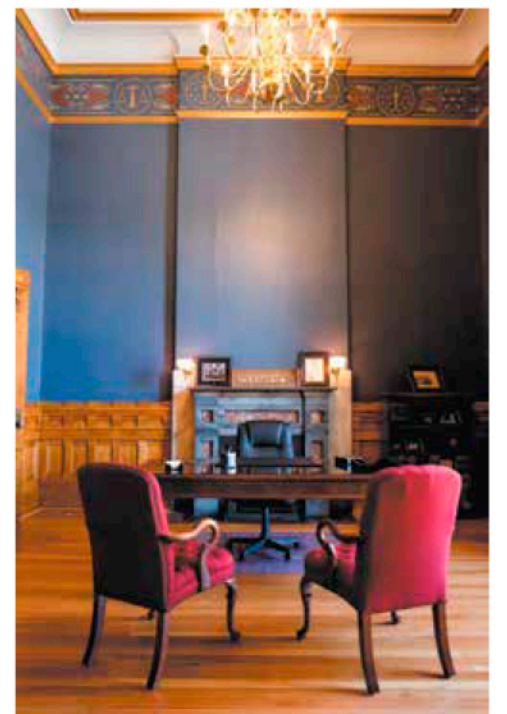
Hill described the office as having long been neglected — including being overlooked during a major Statehouse renovation to mark its centennial in 1988. Damage to walls, floors and the office's electrical wiring was extensive. "The level of disrepair just didn't fit with the rest of the building," he said.

As workers removed layers of old carpet,

padding and flooring, they uncovered original marble and wood floors that since have been buffed and brought back to life. The office also got its first fresh coat of paint in decades.

Looking at the office now compared to when he assumed it in January 2017, Hill said, "It's night and day."

"The Statehouse is a grand and beautiful and regal and respectful place, and the office of the attorney general had been neglected for decades," he said. The renovation "provides really what a Statehouse office should be — a sense of history, a sense of respect. So we're really pleased with it."•



Finishing touches include fresh paint in a palette of state colors and designs including Indiana's torch-and-stars state flag insignia, top. Original hardwood floors, above, as well as marble floors, have been uncovered and brought back to life.



Inmates from the Pendleton Correctional Facility install a heavy oak door that also was crafted by participants in the Department of Correction woodworking program.



Has your office moved into new space, undergone a redesign to improve flow and function, or repurposed a space to better serve the legal needs of clients? Tell us about it, and we may profile your transformation in our occasional series, "Open House." Contact Dave Stafford at dstafford@ibj.com.

Photo courtesy of Indiana Attorney General's office