
Wisdom

Wisdom, a carved marble relief above the south door of the Senate Chamber, completes a three-part design envisioned by sculptor Lee Lawrie. The series also includes panels titled *Courage* and *Patriotism* above the west and east doors. In a 1951 letter to Architect of the Capitol David Lynn, the artist described the symbolism of this panel: "Wisdom is represented by the figure of a woman, from whose head come rays of light. She holds a book symbolizing the experience of the ages, or the Laws. In the other hand she holds a torch which illuminates the sphere representing the earth. The tower on the left is her temple. The stars, earth and clouds suggest that Wisdom is above earthly derivation."

In 1949 the architect of the Capitol began extensive remodeling in the Senate Chamber. As part of this project, Maryland sculptor Lee Lawrie, one of the premier American artists of his day, was selected to design relief panels for placement above the three entrance doors in the Chamber. The artist was paid a total of \$4,500 for the commission. Each panel had a different carver, with Edward H. Ratti of the Bronx, New York, selected to execute *Wisdom* on location in the Chamber. The other panels are *Courage* (p. 86) and *Patriotism* (p. 306).

While modeling the three panels, Lawrie also designed the ornamental bronze clock located above the vice president's desk in the Senate Chamber.



Wisdom

Lee Oscar Lawrie (1877-1963)

Marble, modeled and carved 1950

33 x 68½ inches (83.8 x 174 cm)

Unsigned

Commissioned by the Architect of the Capitol, 1950

Accepted by the Architect of the Capitol, 1950

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