



Government Operations: Feasibility of Outsourcing the Management and Operation of the Capitol Power Plant: Gao-08-382r

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The Capitol Power Plant (CPP), managed by the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), provides heating and cooling for the U.S. Capitol and surrounding facilities. This plant, which provides steam and chilled water year-round for about 16 million square feet of space in 24 facilities, consists of 4 main components--the steam plant, the East Refrigeration Plant, the West Refrigeration Plant, and the administration building. In 2003, CPP awarded a construction contract that involved a major effort both to expand the capacity of the plant to meet the growing heating and cooling needs of the U.S. Capitol and to update plant equipment. The centerpiece of this expansion effort is the West Refrigeration Plant Expansion project, a \$100.9 million project scheduled for completion in March 2008. For more than a decade, potential overstaffing at CPP has been a principal concern. In 1996, an AOC engineering consultant for CPP asserted that CPP was overstaffed and recommended reducing staff as a way to deliver CPP services more costeffectively. In 2004, in response to a congressional mandate to assess CPP operations and infrastructure, we recommended that AOC update the consultant's 1996 study and examine the advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing CPP operations. More recently, in response to congressional concerns about CPP staffing levels, we reported on AOC's management of CPP and made recommendations on CPP's staffing levels. In 2005, we recommended that AOC develop an implementation plan for adjusting staff levels based on a 2004 study conducted by another AOC engineering consultant that found staffing levels higher at CPP than at comparable plants. Because AOC has made little progress in reducing CPP staffing levels and examining sourcing options, congressional concerns about the overall management of CPP persist. Accordingly, we were directed to examine the feasibility of AOC's entering into a contract with a private entity for the management and operation of the CPP. In response, this report discusses (1) the actions that CPP has taken since 2004 to reduce operating costs and increase efficiencies and (2) the challenges that AOC will need to address before it can make future sourcing decisions about CPP operations.

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