

“Renew Robinson: A Grand Old Lady Needs a Re-Do.” Editorial. *Arkansasonline.com*.
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 4 December 2013. Web. 4 December 2013.

Renew Robinson

A grand old lady needs a re-do

This article was published today at 4:16 a.m.

EXORDIUM (INTRODUCTION) AND PARTITO (OVERVIEW) -- THE MAIN CLAIM IS TO SUPPORT THE BOND ISSUE FOR RENOVATING ROBINSON AUDITORIUM BECAUSE OF ROBINSON AUDITORIUM'S LOCATION

HERE are the three best reasons to support the bond issue that would restore, renew and generally revive Robinson Auditorium in Little Rock: location, location and location.

CONFIRMATIO -- SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

That showpiece in the heart of the state's capital city has been allowed to grow old and tarnished over the years. But its location is more advantageous than ever as the city turns to its river with a new realization of its attractions.

Robinson Auditorium already sits on the state's greatest and oldest highway, the same Arkansas River that brought early explorers and settlers up from the Mississippi. Now, with a little help from Little Rock's voters, old Robinson can be new Robinson again, just as it was in 1939. That's the year its neo-classical, art-deco lines took shape, its six great Doric columns rose, and another fine example of New Deal art was completed.

No other site for a premiere attraction like Robinson has the advantage of already being on the Arkansas and just waiting to be brought up to snuff and date.

PARTITIO/CONFIRMATIO -- ANOTHER REASON TO SUPPORT ROBINSON: IT PARALLELS ARKANSAS HISTORY, BOTH ITS UPS AND ITS DOWNS, IN THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE PERFORMED THERE

Let's do it. Not just for Little Rock and Central Arkansas but for the whole state, since Robinson has attracted audiences far beyond Little Rock's city limits. The structure's own memorable history has paralleled Arkansas' with all its ups and downs, proud moments and, yes, shameful ones since it came into existence.

Louis Armstrong, Katharine Hepburn, Ella Fitzgerald, Mae West, Gene Autry, Bob Hope, Ethel Barrymore, Duke Ellington, Guy Lombardo, Eleanor Roosevelt, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Edwin Walker . . . they all stopped at Robinson at some point. A long-lived observer could have settled into a balcony seat in 1939 and watched as the history of Arkansas-and points beyond-passed before his eyes for the next 74 years.

At one time, Duke Ellington, the Duke himself, wouldn't perform there because its seating was segregated by race. A local showman named Jim Porter was arrested there for defying old Jim Crow, and segregation would be shown the exit in 1966.

Lest we forget, there were local heroes as well as haters in Little Rock's history, and Robinson Auditorium's seen 'em come and seen 'em go. Its very name evokes Joseph T. Robinson, Al Smith's running mate in '28 and Franklin D. Roosevelt's majority leader of the U.S. Senate after '32 and the coming of the New Deal. That momentous national adventure and experiment had its great ideas and its awful ones. Robinson Auditorium was one of its good ones. No wonder it's on the National Register of Historic Places. And deserves to be.

NARRATIO -- SETS OUT FACTS AND BACKGROUND [THIS IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM THE TRADITIONAL ORDER: CAN YOU THINK OF WHY THE WRITER MIGHT HAVE DELAYED GIVING THIS INFORMATION?]

Robinson Auditorium's place in history can be assured and continued by passing the \$73.5-million bond issue to restore it. Voters and taxpayers might note that this isn't a new tax; it's not even an extension of an old one. The proposal now on the ballot-early voting began Tuesday and Election Day is Dec. 10th-would just give the city permission to redirect the revenue from its 2 percent hotel-and-convention tax into the old auditorium, where it's much needed, instead of promoting tourism in general. It would surely prove to be a wise investment, just as building Robinson did.

REFUTATION: RESPONDS TO AN OBJECTION

Why not build a whole new auditorium elsewhere?

Short of relocating the Arkansas River, no other site can compete with Robinson's advantages, whether we're talking economical government or historic preservation. At last the grand old lady would have a riverfront address, too, to complement its one on busy Markham, and Arkansas would have a new-old showplace worthy of its capital city and the state as a whole.

PARTITIO/CONFIRMATIO -- ANOTHER REASON TO SUPPORT ROBINSON: ADDS TO THE GRANDEUR OF DOWNTOWN BY MATCHING CLINTON LIBRARY AT OTHER END OF MARKHAM (THIS EXTENDS THE LOCATION ARGUMENT)

A RENEWED Robinson Auditorium would match the Clinton Library on the other end of Markham/President Clinton, and why not? The same two architectural firms have been involved with both projects. With the voters' permission, the two structures, one kind of classical and the other very contemporary, would stand like complementary bookends along a busy thoroughfare. As traffic increases, a way to handle it would have to be tackled, but that's a challenge not beyond good planners, a willing civic spirit, and a forward-looking electorate that can also respect a proud past.

REFUTATION: RESPONDS TO AN IMPLIED OBJECTION BY GIVING AN ANALOGY TO NORTHWEST ARKANSAS: RENOVATION OF EXISTING BUILDING CAN COEXIST WITH BUILDING OF NEW ONES [THE IMPLIED OBJECTION IS THAT WE HAVE NEW BUILDINGS GOING ON; WHY SPEND MONEY ON AN OLD ONE?]

Up in the rising Northwest, great things are being done, too. The statewide, and nationwide, impact of the Crystal Bridges museum at Bentonville is only beginning to be felt. But the reviving effect of Alice Walton's baby hasn't stopped folks in Fayetteville from restoring and expanding the Walton Arts Center. Old and new attractions can advance together. Sometimes they can be combined, as in the old-new Robinson Auditorium in Little Rock. And the whole project could be finished at the same time the new bridge across the Arkansas replaces the old one on Broadway. If both projects can be started about the same time, they'd be finished about the same time, too, and life could go on busier and better than ever.

PERORATION (CONCLUSION)—RESTATES THE CLAIM

That's why the bond issue now on the ballot deserves your support, Little Rock voters. Location, location and location may be the best reasons to vote FOR the bond issue, but they're scarcely the only ones.

Editorial, Pages 16 on 12/04/2013

Print Headline: Renew Robinson