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WASHINGTON

KENNEDY CENTER TO CLOSE FOR RENOVATIONS



KEVIN LAMARQUE, REUTERS

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is shown above tree branches on Aug. 26 in Washington, D.C. The board of the Kennedy Center voted Tuesday to shut down the center for up to two years for repairs.

Decision comes shortly after judge blocked adding Trump’s name

BO ERICKSON AND MIKE SCARCELLA
Reuters

WASHINGTON — The board of the Kennedy Center voted Tuesday to shut down the iconic performing arts venue for up to two years for repairs, a \$257 million renovation project that President Donald Trump later threatened to block unless federal courts allow his name to be added to the building.

The decision by the board, which is chaired by Trump and composed of his allies, came less than two hours after a federal judge blocked the center from adding Trump’s name to its facade for the second time in five months.

In a social media post, Trump said the renovation work would not start until an appeals court weighs in on the judge’s order.

“If the ruling is a negative one, which it should not be, and is not overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, the Reconstruction and the Renovation of The Kennedy Center will not take place,” he wrote on his Truth Social platform.

Tuesday’s developments were the latest twists in the saga of the John F. Kennedy

Memorial Center for the Performing Arts since Trump regained the White House, named himself chairman of the center’s board and announced plans to reshape its programming.

The center, which is also a memorial to the assassinated Kennedy, opened in 1971 with the world premiere of Leonard Bernstein’s requiem mass for Kennedy. It has over the decades been home to the Washington National Opera and the National Symphony Orchestra and hosted such performers as Mikhail Baryshnikov and Wynton Marsalis.

It also hosts the annual Kennedy Center Honors, recognizing the lifetime of achievement of leading artists.

In response to Trump’s takeover, artists have canceled performances in protest, and the opera and the symphony were forced to find other venues, while revenue cratered.

The board warned that the center’s finances are so shaky that it may soon not be able to honor payroll obligations or maintenance contracts.

Trump’s campaign to remake the center is part of his broader effort to leave

his cultural and esthetic mark on the U.S. capital, including a large new ballroom to replace the White House East Wing he ordered demolished, a troubled renovation of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool and a planned “triumphal arch” near the Arlington National Cemetery.

The center’s board has said the venue is in dire need of immediate repairs.

Trump spoke to the board during Tuesday’s meeting, according to a statement from U.S. Rep. Joyce Beatty, an Ohio Democrat who sits on the board due to her position in Congress. Beatty sued to prevent the center from adding Trump’s name, arguing that only Congress has that authority.

“The unlawful renaming drove audiences and artists away. Now the Board has voted to shut down yet again to hide the terrible mismanagement under its current leadership. We’ll see the Defendants in court,” Rep. Beatty’s counsel, Norm Eisen of Democracy Defenders Action and Nathaniel Zelinsky of Washington Litigation Group, said in a statement.

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Government report says Alligator Alcatraz housed people in cages

Controversial center, which cost estimated \$1 billion, closed June 25 after 1 year

CLAIRE HEALY, CHURCHILL NDONWIE
AND ROMY ELLENBOGEN
Miami Herald

MIAMI — The state-run immigration detention center in the Florida Everglades known as “Alligator Alcatraz” violated a host of federal and state detention standards, according to a new government report.

At the center, which cost an estimated \$1 billion and closed on June 25, detainees lacked adequate living space, access to showers, legal information and

clean water, and some were confined in a small metal cage, according to Friday’s report from the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of the Inspector General.

Photos in the report show the metal enclosure, described as 4 feet, 3 inches by 7 feet, 9 inches.

At least 79 men were kept in the space, some for up to two hours, and at least one as a form of punishment. The findings were based on an unannounced inspection conducted in January.

“The use of such restrictive spaces is highly unconventional and does not align with standards for humane treatment,” the report concluded.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

Detainees at the Florida immigration detention center known as “Alligator Alcatraz” are photographed in January.