

My name is Margaret Cowan, and I live in Wilmot, New Hampshire. As an American citizen, I strongly oppose approval of the preliminary and final site and building plans for the proposed New Monumental Arch.

NCPC should not approve this project. At its June meeting, the Commission identified serious unresolved issues involving traffic and pedestrian safety, parking and loading, height justification, FAA coordination, materials, lighting, security, Section 106, and NEPA. These are not minor details to be cleaned up after approval. They are threshold issues that go to whether this project is appropriate, lawful, safe, and respectful of its setting.

The aviation issue alone should prevent approval at this time. A preliminary FAA review is not the same as a completed aeronautical study, especially for a 250-foot structure near Reagan National Airport and its approach and departure corridor. The fact that this so-called monument would require red obstruction lights only underscores how inappropriate it is for the solemn landscape near Arlington National Cemetery.

I have worked in New Hampshire tourism for more than forty years, including as a tour guide in the White Mountain National Forest. I know what happens when a place becomes a required stop: buses arrive, crowds gather, traffic backs up, trash appears, restrooms and walkways are strained, and the place itself starts serving the attraction instead of the other way around.

That may be manageable in a large recreation area designed for visitors. It is entirely wrong for the solemn civic and commemorative landscape near Arlington National Cemetery and the nation's memorial core.

Most importantly, this proposal is an affront to the men and women buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Those who gave their lives in service to this country should not have a 250-foot vanity monument looming over the landscape where they are laid to rest. Arlington is not a backdrop, a branding opportunity, or a place for self-glorification. To impose this arch there would be, in my opinion, a desecration of the memory of our war dead.

A 250-foot occupied arch with elevators, ticketing, restrooms, programming space, and an observation deck would create a spectacle and a pressure point in a place that demands restraint. This project would not honor that landscape. It would desecrate it.

NCPC should not approve the preliminary or final site and building plans. The application should be rejected, deferred, or withdrawn.

Thank you.

Margaret Cowan
Wilmot, New Hampshire