

Comments for the National Capital Planning Commission

The National Mall is America's sacred ground. It marks our victories and mourns our defeats. It inspires humility through the weight of its dignity. It achieves grace by modesty—the understatement that could represent the sacrifice of war in a marble wall or kneeling statute; the anguish and redemption of emancipation in a solitary mausoleum. This is a dignity worth preserving.

In this sacred space, the proposed Monumental Arch would be an obscenity. It would tower over the Lincoln Memorial. It would suggest, by juxtaposition, that the accomplishments of past generations are somehow inferior, or that their quiet dignity was weakness. The opposite is the case.

Most concerning, the Monumental Arch would stamp the Mall with the architecture of despotism. It would impose a sad, faint echo of tyrants like Napoleon and Trajan who left the world burning in their wake. That may be President Trump's preferred legacy. But it should not be America's.

Respectfully,

Sam Van Kopp