Comments on the New Monumental Arch Project

My personal objections to the “New Monumental Arch project” initially sprung from both the aesthetic travesty and from the proposal’s insult to the citizens of this country. Something is very wrong when the President of the United States undertakes a project to build a monument honoring himself -- or “me” (his word). Something is very wrong when the President of the United States orders a rush job because if a monument is to be built in his honor, he has to do it (his words). Something is very wrong when the President of the United States views the nation’s capital city as his sandbox to play in because working on a construction project is “really like relaxation for me.” (his words).

During this and previous NCPC meetings on the proposed Arch, I have heard testimony from architects addressing the flawed conception of the project. I have heard historians speak to the significance of the physical relationship of Arlington House and the Lincoln Memorial. I have heard testimony about the devastating impact on the symbolic importance of the monuments and memorials and the aesthetic beauty of this planned city. I have heard testimony from professionals knowledgeable about practice, policy and law condemn this project as a blatant subversion of our rules-based history and legal codes.

All of this testimony strengthened my initial objections to this project, but I have learned much more. Like Donald Trump, I have not served in the military, do not come from a military family and do not have family buried in Arlington Cemetery. The testimony of those in the military and from military families has truly opened my eyes to how the Arch would be a desecration of what is considered sacred ground.

Commission Chair Paoletta is credited with saying that leaving Memorial Circle empty would be “a disgrace to our nation and her noble veterans.” I hope that the fact-based, heartfelt and heartbreaking comments from thousands of American citizens will convince the Commission to vote to leave the Circle as a quiet place, respectful of the dead and their service to this country. The testimony makes clear that the Circle is not

empty and that building a grotesque monument to one man’s ego would be the “disgrace to our nation and her noble veterans.”

The Commission has the power to honor the people of the United States and to stop the selfish and misguided desires of a petulant ruler. I ask you to do so today.

Diane DeFries
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