Written testimony for the National Capital Planning Commission

Meeting: Thursday, November 5, 2026, 1:00 pm ET, online

Item: Monumental Arch at Memorial Circle, final site and building plans (File 8778)

Submitted by: Ed Higgins, United States Marine Corps veteran

Position: Opposed to the final site and building plans

My name is Ed Higgins. I am a United States Marine Corps veteran, and I am part of the planning group behind Stop the Arch, the veterans and military families who stood in silence at Arlington on October 27 and 28.

I am not here against monuments. I have stood in formation at the Memorial Bridge end of Memorial Circle. I know what that ground is for. It is the front door to Arlington National Cemetery, where this country buries its war dead. Everything about that place speaks in a low voice. The rows of headstones. The changing of the guard. The silence that settles over you the moment you cross the river.

A 250 foot triumphal arch at Memorial Circle would speak over all of it. At 25 stories, it would tower over the approach to the cemetery and compete with the Lincoln Memorial across the river. That is not honoring the fallen. That is using their ground as a backdrop.

The men and women buried at Arlington did not ask to be part of anyone's legacy project. Their families come to that circle to grieve and to remember, in quiet. A triumphal arch celebrates the power of the living. Arlington honors the sacrifice of the dead. Those two things do not belong on the same ground, and putting them there anyway tells every veteran watching that our sacred places are available for decoration.

I took an oath to the Constitution. That oath has no expiration date, and it includes defending what this country sets aside for its dead. I am asking this commission to vote no on the final site and building plans for the Monumental Arch at Memorial Circle. If a monument is to be built, let it stand somewhere that does not borrow its meaning from the graves of the fallen.

Thank you for your time, and for letting a veteran be heard on the record.