Gary Langston, Jr.

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Like all of you, my family cares a lot about the future of our Capital City, and Arlington Cemetery, where some of you have family at rest.

Since our National Mall is already full, this Commission is charged with making decisions that include support for future monuments and memorials.

As the Chairman of the Commission on Fine Arts said at the second meeting on the Arch, the Monumental Core of Washington needs to be extended. And for sure we should mark 250 years of our democracy.

Unfortunately, this project does not do either thing well. I say that because a Monument at Memorial Circle does not create space for future memorials, whereas a different location could extend the monumental core in a more useful direction. And other than a height of 250 feet, there is nothing in the current design that represents our celebration of democracy to me. Perhaps the yet to come comprehensive sculpture program, to be reviewed by the Commission on Fine Arts at a future date, will show the relevance to our 250th, but you do not have that here today to consider.

But even if it does, Memorial Circle is no place for a brightly lit edifice that would tower over Arlington House and the Kennedy Gravesite, and proclaim triumph where solemnity is precious.

Arlington Cemetery is intentionally dark at night – even the nearby parking lot shuts down, without lights, respecting the soft lighting at Arlington House and JFK's Eternal Flame, visible from afar. This cannot be disturbed. The brightly lit Arch with another Eternal Flame will be attributed to a living President, in competition with Lincoln and Kennedy, especially when demolition of the Kennedy Center is threatened. Triumphal honors to our Veterans and our Democracy belong somewhere else. The Finding of No Significant Impact is very misleading.

My father, also Gary Langston, was an Army helicopter pilot who served two tours in Vietnam. He was drafted while in College and served 22 years. My mother was a nurse and a traditional Army wife. Ours is a fortunate story, not tragic like so many others. They are buried together at Arlington. We live here in Washington where we raised two sons.

The Honor Flights that once brought World War II vets to DC now bring our last class of draftees here. They go to the Mall, the Wall, Memorial Circle, Memorial Avenue to the Hemicycle. It's solemn – this Circle is correctly named – Memorial. Not a Monument. Your

own NCPC Master Plan rules out this site, and provides a long list of alternatives elsewhere.

In a democracy we are guaranteed to have some disagreement. All the more reason to seek authorization from the Congress, for every undertaking in our Capital City, to confirm the desires of the decent American people, independent of how any monument or memorial is funded, or who is in office at any given time.