Jimi Shaughnessy Personal testimony to The National Capital Planning Commission regarding project:
New Monumental Arch, file # 8778, Meeting date November 5th 2026

I speak as a private citizen: a Marine Corps combat veteran, son of a veteran, and grandson of generations of combat veterans spanning nearly 200 years.

Buried in Section 60 are my great-grandfather and great-grandmother.

He a combat veteran who led the charge on horseback against Pancho Villa and would go on to serve in both world wars.

She a combat nurse who tended to wounded young men during World War II. They didn't question whether they should serve — only how long they would be permitted to.

As a young Marine, I was impressed by their example.

Their commitment to service and country became values I carried through my enlistment and combat tour — a tour in which I lost friends before I could learn their full names.

Now, potentially a gigantic arch will cast a shadow on my resting family, friends and leathernecks, as vanity is rewarded with a momentous symbol of selfishness.

A 250-foot arch is a profound disruption and insult at the entrance to sacred ground.

The space at the gates of Arlington Cemetery exists as a threshold — a transitory passage between service and burial. To preserve that integrity, it must remain open and unobstructed.

The origin of this arch was not born from conversation and contemplation with military members, veterans, their families, or the entities that serve these populations.

It was not a discussion with the American people.

Not a discussion for the American people.

But rather an attempt to gain the attention of one man.

Service members and their families navigate many transitions throughout a military career and beyond. The transition out of the military is among the most dangerous periods a Servicemember will face.

That final transition — from service to eternal rest — is not theirs to manage. It is ours. It falls to us, the living, to receive our wounded and our dead with the highest esteem and care.

An arch is not what they need.

Who is this arch for?

Is it for me? The president has already answered that question, and yes, it is for him.

This arch would obstruct the sight line of the Arlington Memorial Bridge, a symbol of unity and reconciliation connecting those divided by war and grief. Rather than honoring that unity, it deepens a wound that has not fully healed.

Hasty construction is no path to a monument worthy of this nation. Previous memorials were shaped by extensive public input and rigorous agency review, ensuring that the final design reflected our shared values. This proposal has had neither.

Others have already raised the serious safety hazards of placing a monument in a roundabout at a high-traffic intersection — consistent with this administration's pattern of placing pedestrians in harm's way.

Every view from our contemplated landscape will be dominated by an overt symbol of hasty, selfish celebration.

Approaching drivers will have their view of Arlington obstructed as they gawk at the mammoth, sterling-white blocks of stamped façade.

Once atop the observation deck, there are two choices:

Gawk with an amusement-like stare at the cotton bright gravestones, diligently plotted across the hillside.

Or turn your back on our fallen comrades and take in the stunning views.

The administration has chosen to ignore the established protocol and precedent for this project, which is allowing congress to write into law the authorization for construction of a memorial structure. Instead, rubber-stamping every aspect of this project — contradicting the very purpose of pre-established criteria meant to determine a structure's path.

The precedent cited for this project is beyond flawed and outdated.

One hundred years old and two pillars apart is hardly sturdy footing for an arch.

This project does not honor any living or deceased patriot of ours.

Funding has been stripped from the VA, NPS, and DOI, degrading the capacity of the very agencies that provide direct services to veterans and their families. If we are to truly support the men and women who serve in uniform, direct this money to those agencies.

How will this project be funded? With our tax dollars?

With redirected entrance fees from parks across the country? Anonymous donations flowing into another undisclosed fund?

We deserve an answer.

This is not political, this is eternal.

No one needs this arch.

It is inappropriate, unnecessary, insulting, it is a waste of our land, our time, and our money.