Dear Chairman and Members of the National Capital Planning Commission,

I am writing as a retired United States Army Infantry Officer from California to respectfully request that the Commission reject approval for the proposed triumphal arch project at Memorial Circle.

During my 30 year military career, I served two combat tours, received the Bronze Star, and have the privilege of being affiliated with the 3rd Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard). Throughout my service, I bore the solemn duty of burying soldiers from my units in national cemeteries across our country. Arlington National Cemetery stands as the ultimate benchmark of that sacrifice - a place defined by quiet reverence, where grieving families and a grateful nation come to honor those who gave everything.

1. Disruption of Historic Sightlines and Reconciliation Axis: The linear axis connecting the Lincoln Memorial across the Arlington Memorial Bridge to Arlington House was intentionally designed as a symbol of post-Civil War national unity. Erecting a 250-foot structure along this corridor severs this visual link, overshadowing the Lincoln Memorial and competing with the quiet landscape of Arlington National Cemetery.

2. Preservation of Solemnity and Military Values: Arlington demands humility and quiet dignity. Transforming the primary ceremonial approach to our nation's premier military cemetery into a towering, high-density monumental attraction conflicts directly with the solemn atmosphere necessary for grieving families and visitors paying tribute to America's fallen.

3. Traffic Congestion, Public Safety, and Aviation Hazards: Memorial Circle is a complex, heavily trafficked circle serving regional commuters, cemetery visitors, and traffic to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). Adding a major tourist node at this intersection will exacerbate congestion, potentially delaying emergency response vehicles and official funeral processions. Furthermore, placing a 250-foot structure directly within DCA flight paths introduces unaddressed aviation safety concerns.

4. Bypassing Legal and Statutory Mandates: Major commemorative works in the National Capital Region require explicit Congressional authorization under the Commemorative Works Act (Title 40). Bypassing this statutory requirement undermines established federal oversight. Moreover, environmental and historic preservation reviews conducted under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) were rushed and insufficient given the magnitude of this project.

For these reasons - grounded in historic preservation, public safety, statutory compliance, and deep respect for our nation's veterans and fallen heroes - I urge the Commission to vote against approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Mjolsness
Colonel (Retired)
United States Army Infantry