# NCPC Testimony

I am a West Point graduate and disabled Vietnam veteran. I served as a special assistant to the U.S. commander in Vietnam, General Westmoreland, during the Tet Offensive in 1968. As Air Force assistant secretary, I set aside a hangar at Andrews Air Force Base for the staging of the architectural competition for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where Maya Lin's design was chosen. As a former law clerk to the Chief Justice, who is interred at Arlington National Cemetery, I wrote an op-ed for *U.S. News and World Report* in 2024 objecting to then-candidate Trump's violating regulations prohibiting partisan activity at ANC.

Although I testify as a citizen and veteran, not as a lawyer, I fully support the litigation in *Lemmon v. Trump* opposing the arch, share the injury plaintiffs assert, and agree that President Trump has violated his Constitutional duty to "take care" that the laws governing the construction of such a facility be faithfully executed.

I have friends and West Point classmates buried at Arlington National Cemetery and named on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The lives of persons recognized at these hallowed grounds are emblematic of the deepest patriotic sacrifice. I and many thousands of Americans visit these grounds regularly to pay our respects to our loved ones who gave the last full measure of devotion to our country.

The construction of the proposed arch directly between these two remarkable expressions of honorable service appreciation violates the spirit of each, cheapens their American symbolism, and does violence to the sacred memories we honor during our visits. The arch's brutal and insensitive size detracts from the modest reflection of love, remembrance and selflessness the existing memorials encourage. And the arch would forever bring to mind the evident rationale for its construction: President Trump's exercise of his desire to memorialize himself.

Such a purpose is especially objectionable coming from a military high school graduate who did everything he could to dodge the draft during the Vietnam war, and a President who declined to visit a cemetery in France honoring the fallen American troops from World War I and was said by his former Chief of Staff to have called them "losers."

Bringing such disgraceful attitudes to mind would be profoundly perverse and do permanent damage to the national psyche of those affected by an allegiance to the call to arms. The proposed arch should await approval by Congress, which could speak in concert more reliably for the values we all hold close to our hearts.

Joseph Zengerle, October 31, 2026