Opposition to NCPC File 8778 — New Monumental Arch

Members of the National Capital Planning Commission:

I am a New Hampshire resident with more than forty years of experience in tourism. I have previously testified against this project, and the staff recommendation for approval has only deepened my concerns.

Arlington National Cemetery is sacred ground. The historic corridor connecting Arlington House, Arlington Memorial Bridge, and the Lincoln Memorial deserves dignity, reflection, and respect.

Yet your own staff report acknowledges that this 250-foot arch would completely obstruct views between Arlington House and the Lincoln Memorial terrace from higher elevations.

How can such damage to this historic landscape be acknowledged and then recommended for approval?

The Lincoln Memorial honors a president who helped preserve our Union. Arlington National Cemetery honors those who sacrificed for it. Neither deserves to be overshadowed by an enormous presidential vanity project.

And this is hardly a simple commemorative arch.

It is a massive tourist attraction with elevators, ticketing, security screening, public restrooms, an observation deck, and even the possibility of a gift shop and café.

We are proposing to transform the solemn approach to Arlington National Cemetery into a destination for sightseeing, shopping, and potentially dining.

To me, that cheapens our nation's history and insults the dignity of those buried nearby.

My decades in tourism have taught me what major attractions bring: tour buses, congestion, crowds, noise, and demands on public facilities.

The staff report acknowledges plans to use Arlington National Cemetery's parking garage for arch visitors, yet recommends continued coordination rather than requiring these arrangements to be resolved before approval.

And what about grieving families? Even innocent tourist activity can intrude upon the solemnity of a military funeral or a family's visit to a gravesite.

These are human consequences, not simply logistical details.

The Commission is being asked to approve a project despite acknowledged damage to historic views and unresolved concerns about its operation.

I urge you to consider whether approval under these circumstances fulfills your responsibility to protect our nation's capital.

Arlington National Cemetery deserves reverence, not commercialization. Our nation's history deserves preservation, not a monument to presidential vanity.

I urge you to reject final approval of File 8778.

Thank you.