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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Statement of Rep. Jared Huffman

on the Monumental Arch (NCPC File Number 8778)

before the National Capital Planning Commission

November 5, 2026

Chair Paoletta and members of the Commission, I am Jared Huffman, the Ranking Member of the House Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, the Commemorative Works Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act.

I urge you to reject the final design of the Monumental Arch project today. This arch would dishonor America, our ideals, and our laws. We should honor the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by upholding the rights of the American people—and their votes on Tuesday—rather than indulging a President who thinks he is a king.

Building this arch in Memorial Circle would disrupt the solemn connection between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery, fracturing a view meant to underscore the unity and sacrifice of the American people with a structure usually built by emperors or kings for their own aggrandizement. If President Trump wants to build a monument, he needs Congress's authorization. Being President does not put him above that requirement. Washington, D.C., is not a personal playground for his pathetic attempts to manufacture undeserved glory for himself. Congress—representing the American people—is the appropriate venue for debating a monument and its location in the District of Columbia. Ignoring the law and steamrolling forward with consideration of this un-American arch proposal is a dishonor to the American people and everything we stand for as a country.

The arch is unlawful under the Commemorative Works Act. It is also unlawful under a separate statute that explicitly prohibits building any "structure" on this kind of federal land in D.C. without

"express authority of Congress."[1] Its environmental assessment is inadequate under the National Environmental Policy Act. It does nothing to mitigate the harm to other memorials and Arlington National Cemetery under the National Historic Preservation Act. All of these laws fall within the jurisdiction of the Natural Resources Committee, and all of these issues are being litigated in the courts.

Let me zero in on one of them. The Department of the Interior (DOI) and the National Park Service (NPS) do not have a valid authorization for building an arch in Memorial Circle. They are relying on vague wording in the 1925 statute authorizing the construction of the Memorial Bridge. A century-old authorization to build a bridge is in no way a blank check to build whatever Donald Trump wants. This language does not fulfill the requirements of the bipartisan Commemorative Works Act (CWA) or provide a way to sidestep the process established by it. The legislative history of the CWA also makes clear that Congress was concerned with preserving certain visual connections, including the one formed by the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery. The 1925 law itself precludes the action President Trump and DOI are undertaking since the bridge was completed within the timeline, using essentially all of the funds allocated for it, under that statute.

Since there is no Congressional authorization for the Monumental Arch, DOI, NPS and this Commission should suspend their work on the project. Officials working to advance a project not authorized by Congress will put themselves at legal risk. Firms engaged to work on an unauthorized project will face similar risks. I urge all officials and firms involved with this project to consider the legal hazards they may face by advancing it.

Today the commission has heard and will hear additional concerns from individuals and organizations about the proposed arch. This underscores that Congress is the appropriate venue for consideration of how and where we should mark 250 years of the United States—not left to a self-absorbed President and his cronies. Congress is best situated to facilitate the debate and ideas for a monument for all Americans and is, importantly, accountable to them, unlike this Commission.

[1] 40 U.S.C. § 8106.

In closing, I once again urge you to listen to those speaking out today, to recognize this is an unauthorized, illegal project, and to reject the final design of the proposed arch.