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DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

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.

DONALD S. BEYER, JR.
8TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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November 4, 2026

Testimony for the November 5, 2026 Commission Meeting

I am proud to represent Virginia's Eighth Congressional District, home to Arlington National Cemetery and adjacent to the proposed location of this project on Columbia Island.

In my time in Congress, I have never seen a project with such profound, widespread opposition from the very people who it will affect most.

I therefore testify today as both the family member of parents, grandparents, and a sister buried at Arlington National Cemetery, *and* as another voice joining the many residents of Northern Virginia who have spoken out against this project.

I have seen and heard their concerns, and I expect you to give them the same respect and consideration.

To echo their sentiments, the proposed "Triumphal Arch" is a disgrace and an unnecessary danger to the area, for no other reason than to build a monument to the President's ego.

The evidence before you is overwhelming.

Despite the Administration rushing this process through every step of the process, the National Park Service *still* found that it will harm dozens of nearby historic sites. That includes creating a permanent blight in the solemn viewshed of Arlington National Cemetery, turning our government's back on the servicemembers buried there and their families.

And erecting a 250-foot structure on a small island in the Potomac will not only affect irreplaceable historic sites. It will snarl traffic for years, impact the nearby airport, and present even more serious threats to public safety that this Commission has refused to acknowledge and grapple with.

While the President has called for the project to be "converted" to a base for drones and snipers, that appears nowhere in this Commission's consideration of the project. Apparently, placing a large weapons cache within feet of tourists, pedestrians, cyclists, Metro riders, and drivers commuting to work is not worth serious concern by a Commission tasked with region-wide planning. I can only conclude that by rubber-stamping the Arch without considering that position, this Commission is either calling the President a liar or knowingly moving forward with an incomplete and potentially-fraudulent application.

That is only one of the many times the American people have been lied to at every step of this project.

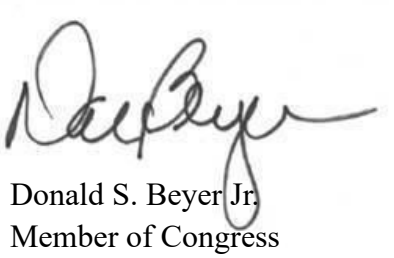
They have heard lies that this project was approved by Congress more than 100 years ago. It was not. Moving forward without Congressional authorization is a violation of Congress's Constitutional authority, and that authorization has not been granted.

The American people have also heard lies that the process would be transparent. It has not been. In September, I drove down to Columbia Island myself to find workers operating heavy equipment. They refused to answer whether that machinery was part of preparation for the Arch, despite a court-ordered requirement that notice be given ahead of any work.

It's time for the lies to stop, and for this sham process to end.

I urge you to take your responsibilities seriously, and to resist political pressure to rubber-stamp this unjustified, harmful, and disgraceful project.

Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Comments on the proposed Monumental Arch in Memorial Circle

Thank you, Commissioners, for the opportunity to speak. My name is Peter Siegel and I am a U.S. citizen. The proposed Monumental Arch as currently planned and placed will monopolize the historic landscape of Washington DC. When asked "who is [this arch] for," President Trump replied, "me." That's the long and short of it. As far as I can tell the National Capital Planning Commission's mission, in its current makeup, is to realize Trump's desire, regardless of the multiple adverse effects on National Register-listed properties the arch will have as sited in Memorial Circle. Those adverse effects have been detailed by others and will not repeated here. I listened to most of the public comments during the Commission's July meeting. The majority of commissioners pointedly ignored the comments from experts in historic preservation and preservation law in favor of ideology and, most importantly, fealty to Trump. Consistent with the rest of the Trump administration, ideology overrules expertise in matters of science, medicine, climate, environment, public health, civil rights, and, yes, preservation of historical resources. In addition to comments from experts in historic preservation, I was most impressed with testaments by Gold Star mothers and combat vets who observed that the arch will be a colossal and deliberate sign of disrespect to the memories of their deceased children and colleagues, respectively, who are buried in the quietude of Arlington National Cemetery. That quietude will be replaced by a circus-like atmosphere centered around the 250-foot arch with an enormous observation deck where tourists will have an aerial opportunity to gawk at the solemn funerals of our military veterans.

I would echo the comments of Representative Huffman that this project as currently designed is illegal at least under the terms of the Commemorative Works Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. Finally, given the extreme financial pain average Americans are experiencing under the current administration building another massively expensive vanity project is a slap in the face to them. Commissioners: I will leave you with this thought. As you vote, imagine yourself looking a Gold Star mother in the eye as you provide a justification for this monstrosity that is an affront to the memory of her child. Thank you.

Gary Langston, Jr.

Colonel, US Army (Retired)

Washington DC

Like all of you, my family cares a lot about the future of our Capital City, and Arlington Cemetery, where some of you have family at rest.

Since our National Mall is already full, this Commission is charged with making decisions that include support for future monuments and memorials.

As the Chairman of the Commission on Fine Arts said at the second meeting on the Arch, the Monumental Core of Washington needs to be extended. And for sure we should mark 250 years of our democracy.

Unfortunately, this project does not do either thing well. I say that because a Monument at Memorial Circle does not create space for future memorials, whereas a different location could extend the monumental core in a more useful direction. And other than a height of 250 feet, there is nothing in the current design that represents our celebration of democracy to me. Perhaps the yet to come comprehensive sculpture program, to be reviewed by the Commission on Fine Arts at a future date, will show the relevance to our 250th, but you do not have that here today to consider.

But even if it does, Memorial Circle is no place for a brightly lit edifice that would tower over Arlington House and the Kennedy Gravesite, and proclaim triumph where solemnity is precious.

Arlington Cemetery is intentionally dark at night – even the nearby parking lot shuts down, without lights, respecting the soft lighting at Arlington House and JFK's Eternal Flame, visible from afar. This cannot be disturbed. The brightly lit Arch with another Eternal Flame will be attributed to a living President, in competition with Lincoln and Kennedy, especially when demolition of the Kennedy Center is threatened. Triumphal honors to our Veterans and our Democracy belong somewhere else. The Finding of No Significant Impact is very misleading.

My father, also Gary Langston, was an Army helicopter pilot who served two tours in Vietnam. He was drafted while in College and served 22 years. My mother was a nurse and a traditional Army wife. Ours is a fortunate story, not tragic like so many others. They are buried together at Arlington. We live here in Washington where we raised two sons.

The Honor Flights that once brought World War II vets to DC now bring our last class of draftees here. They go to the Mall, the Wall, Memorial Circle, Memorial Avenue to the Hemicycle. It's solemn – this Circle is correctly named – Memorial. Not a Monument. Your

own NCPC Master Plan rules out this site, and provides a long list of alternatives elsewhere.

In a democracy we are guaranteed to have some disagreement. All the more reason to seek authorization from the Congress, for every undertaking in our Capital City, to confirm the desires of the decent American people, independent of how any monument or memorial is funded, or who is in office at any given time.

Good Afternoon. My name is Amy Peck Abraham. I am a member of Third Act DMV. And I say: No Arch. Not on my watch.

There is only one reason this "new" monumental arch is to be 250 feet high, it is the dictate of one narcissistic ego.

There is only one reason he very recently appointed his three members to this Commission, their BLIND LOYALTY to their Emperor.

If he demanded that his arch be painted with pink and green stripes, *then would you have found your spine?*

The Founding Fathers created THREE EQUAL BRANCHES of government in the Constitution. But today a TYRANT is the EXECUTIVE BRANCH.

Last week, I sat – IN PERSON - in JUDGE Tanya Chutkan's COURTROOM. ATTORNEYS GENERAL of the District of Columbia and the State of Virginia have sued to stop construction; they argue this project is "flagrantly unlawful." Judge Chutkan has the ultimate power to issue a restraining order. Yesterday she issued an order requiring this Commission to notify her within the hour of their decision on this proposal. Further, she ordered that within thirty minutes of any activity towards Construction at Memorial Circle, the National Park Service must file a notice on the docket. Any violation of her orders would be considered an act of Contempt of Court undertaken by the Executive Branch.

To members of CONGRESS listening, Secretary Burgum has not reprogrammed funds previously appropriated to the Department of the Interior. Every penny that paid for contracts with Harrison Design, Musco Lighting and Grunley Construction was ILLEGALLY spent. I call on Democratic Members of Congress to include legislative language in the upcoming Continuing Resolution prohibiting taxpayer dollars from going towards any of the vanity projects of the "Builder in Chief". No Construction of his Vainglorious Behemoth may proceed without contemporary Congressional Authorization.

America's fragile system of checks and balances is being challenged. We The People voted overwhelmingly to restore power to the Legislative Branch. And yet, by tweet, this Executive egoist directs his minions to go defy Court Orders.

Lastly, I want to say thanks to the Commission for providing Arch Opponents Langan Engineering's' Confidential Demolition and Site Preparation Plan in their agenda materials.

My name is Amy Peck Abraham. Third Act DMV. No Arch. Not on my watch.

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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.

My name is Jamie Langston. I am a citizen of the United States, resident of Washington DC, and Veteran of the Gulf War.

As a Citizen, I oppose construction of the Arch on legal grounds. In our democracy, the government and its citizens are bound by LAW not the arbitrary whims of individuals — especially not those entrusted to serve the People.

As a resident of DC, I oppose its location, excessive size, lighting and garish design; the risks it poses to air, vehicle and pedestrian traffic; and most especially because it literally destroys the thoughtful symmetry of our historical landmarks and the deliberately open view shed of our Nation's Capitol and the 250 year history of our Democracy.

And as a Veteran, I am appalled by the vulgar disregard for our fallen heroes who rightly deserve to Rest in Peace.

My father-in-law was interred at Arlington on a bitterly cold day in March of 2014 in blizzard-like conditions. The entire city was shut down, including the federal government. But the solemn work at Arlington never ceases. The wind and snow viciously tore at our coats and stung our cheeks. The honor guard stood at attention, seemingly impervious to the elements as they rendered their dignified respects to Lieutenant Colonel Gary E. Langston, two tour Vietnam Veteran, helicopter pilot, husband and father of two boys. As the bugle sounded its slow and mournful final farewell, the earth stood still. The purity of each

note pierces your soul, mingles with your grief, and it never leaves you.

To desecrate that very personal and private space to grieve with the deafening thrum of construction drowning out Taps and later with the irreverent snipers taking selfies with tourists on the viewing deck is an obscene breach of trust between our Country and those who serve honorably.

This Arch honors no one. It destroys the sanctity of Arlington Cemetery in utter disrespect for the service and sacrifice of our Nation's heroes. And there is nothing — *nothing* more sickening or UNAmerican than disrespecting those who would literally die for our freedom.

Everyone on this committee has a choice. You can choose to approve this illegal project or like all of us Veterans past, present and future, you can put your country first. And if you won't do that simply by following the law, then shame on you, shame on every last one of you for enjoying the freedoms guaranteed by our collective service.

5 November 2026 Statement of VVA Chapter 227 President Jay Kalner to NCPC

I am here to speak for the some 430,000 souls resting in peace at Arlington National Cemetery immediately adjacent to Memorial Circle where the "Triumphal Arch Military Complex," as the President called it on 2 November, would be built. These 430,000 souls cannot state their wish for solace and solemnity when their families come to reflect and mourn, so others must surface to speak out on their behalf. As the President of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 227 in Northern Virginia (the largest in Virginia), as a retired 35-year CIA analyst, and as a member of the Arlington County Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, I strongly believe that I must speak for those souls who have no voice. Why, you may ask? It's largely because some of my brothers in the military (from my own unit in Vietnam) and from the CIA are resting in this sacred Cemetery.

I also felt it was imperative to touch base with VVA National President Tom Burke on VVA's position on the Arch proposal. I asked him whether he had consulted other veteran service organizations (or VSOs), and whether there would be a problem if our chapter took a stand opposing the Arch. Burke said that National probably would not take a position on a perceived political issue. He further said that he hadn't discussed the matter with other VSOs, and that Chapter 227 was free to present its views independently.

On 27 October, VVA National, along with several other VSOs, issued a public statement that they saw the Administration's Arch proposal as a political issue and their best course would be to remain neutral. However, the very next day, we discovered that VVA National had joined a brief to the Court "fully supporting" the government's intent to build the Arch. Then, on 29 October, Burke publicly declared that "my position on this matter may have been incorrect based on some inaccurate information available to me at the time." That night, at a special chapter board meeting, we resolved unanimously to ask Burke to pull VVA out of the supportive court brief, especially after learning that no canvassing of the organization's 94,000 members was conducted. Burke has not responded to us nor apparently made such a request to the Court.

Just imagine for a moment what building this Arch would entail — heavy duty construction that would take three years or more to complete, including a planned 20-hour workday. While others have pointed to the destruction of historic sight lines, intensity of nighttime lighting, and the resulting snarled traffic, I point to the visiting family coming to the Cemetery for the burial of their husband, wife, son, or daughter. I can only envision their tear-filled faces as nearby jackhammers are blasting away in the drifting noise and haze.

Lastly, I'm trying to picture how grieving families and other visitors will feel about going by a 25-story high "Triumphal Arch Military Complex" on the way to the Cemetery. As President Trump described it on 2 November, "it is going to have tremendous drone capability. I would say sniper or shooter capability, its height, its platforms, its storage capacity is incredible. It's the best . . . right smack in the middle of everything." I am proud to speak for the 430,000 souls laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery who represent the very best in defending America and should be honored with all due respect.

Testimony
New Monumental Arch-File 8778
National Capital Planning Commission Meeting
November 5, 2026

by Dale S. Brown

My name is Dale Brown and I've lived in the District of Columbia since childhood. I love this city and I love this country.

Love leads me to testify against this arch. I want to reach you person to person, heart to heart, and share my deepest concerns.

I am against this arch for three reasons; what it symbolizes, aviation safety, and its effect on our warriors who rest at Arlington Cemetery. The arch is big. It's bold. And it does look triumphant. And our country is all those things, but we are also ingenious, humble, caring, and connected to each other. We don't stand above. We stand among. The arch does not represent the country I know.

I also have concerns about aviation because I was raised right beside the Potomac river which the pilots have to follow in order to land. The arch is right in the flight path. Even though the FAA has approved it, I have my doubts as do a lot of experts. The FAA said the arch had to be lit with eternal flame. What does the FAA mean? An eternal flame is for memorializing, not for aviation.

I mostly care about Arlington National Cemetery. I have attended funerals there and know people buried there. I am close to a widow of a person buried there.

The arch interferes with the peace and sacredness of the space. Many veterans groups have come out against it. Do we really want a Pedestrian bridge where people see the beautiful white gravestones, but without the understanding that comes from entering the space? Do we really want lights that interfere with the quiet and sacred peace of night? Do we really want this arch?

So in closing, I want to ask each of you to look within your heart and think about the arch. How will your vote impact your legacy? Think about our country, our landscape, and what your vote could mean. Can you delay the vote? Do you really want this arch and how will you explain your vote to future generations?

Please, as a citizen and person and human-to-human, I ask you to not approve this arch.

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

November 4, 2026

Mr. William Scharf
Chair, National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)
401 Ninth Street NW, Suite 500N
Washington, DC 20004

Re: New Monumental Arch Project, NCPC File Number: 8778

Dear Chair Scharf and NCPC Commissioners:

At its November 5, 2026, meeting, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) is scheduled to vote on approval of final site and building plans for the proposed Monumental Arch in Memorial Circle, Washington, D.C. (NCPC File No. 8778), submitted by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Commission has invited public input to inform their review, and we, the Heritage Conservation Committee of the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH), respectfully submit the following comments for the Commission's consideration.

SAH is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1940, with headquarters in Chicago, IL, that serves an international network of institutions and individuals who focus on the history of the built environment and its role in shaping contemporary life. As the leading scholarly organization for architectural historians in North America, SAH limits its advocacy to matters of national and international importance.

The proposed 250-foot Monumental Arch is in Memorial Avenue Corridor, a nationally significant cultural landscape that extends between the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and the Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. SAH previously voiced its concerns about this proposal via written and oral testimony at both the concept and preliminary review stage of this project in June and July of 2026.[1] The project has now been resubmitted to NCPC for final approval. Based on our review, the applicant has done little to nothing to address the substantial adverse impacts caused by this project to our nation's most significant historic sites. The applicant's own assessments have continually noted that adversely affected historic properties include six National Historic Landmarks (NHLs), eight historic districts, eight cultural landscapes, and twenty individual or other types of historic properties. The applicant further noted that archaeological resources, which are still being identified, would also be adversely affected by the undertaking.[2] The project has also generated a huge amount of expert and public commentary in opposition to the project. Yet, the applicant has disregarded these concerns, instead asking the ACHP to (and ultimately being successful in) terminating the Section 106 process that could have mitigated the adverse impacts through a process of consultation and collaboration.

We ask that NCPC vote **not to approve** this project. We offer the following brief comments for our recommendation, and refer you to our more substantive commentary on these issues included in our prior (June/July) letters:

1. The applicant's claim included in the submission that the architectural history of this site supports the construction of monumental triumphal arches is incorrect. In fact, as enumerated in our June 2026 letter, the 1901 McMillan Plan and its further development throughout the early 20th century leading up to and beyond the construction of Memorial Circle, has constantly upheld that any structures built within this corridor should not interfere with the sightlines between Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House, and that they be low-profile. The two unbuilt 166-foot-tall columns from the 1920s, that the applicant has been utilizing to justify congressional

approval, location and height of this 250-foot monumental arch, were completely dissimilar in intent, design, size, height, proportion and location. Most importantly, they avoided many of the adverse impacts, especially to viewsheds, that this project has.

2. The applicant has not provided any compelling justification for why this project needs to be in this location where it causes harm to so many existing historic resources. Surely, there are multiple viable sites in Washington DC (as suggested by various consulting parties in the terminated Section 106 consultation), which would have met the goal of memorializing America's 250th anniversary, without causing irreparable harm to our country's revered and designated historic sites.
3. The project suffers from various unresolved questions around materials, transportation, pedestrian safety, to name a few, all of which were raised by your own NCPC staff reports. The applicant's response to these concerns, submitted as part of the final approval package, falls woefully short. For most questions, the applicant notes that they will be resolved in future phases of the project. This indicates that the applicant is not ready for final approval and NCPC should exercise its due diligence in requesting and deliberating on this information when it is ready.
4. The applicant's complete disregard of overwhelming commentary from the public and various civic and cultural organizations in the country in opposition to this project sets an alarming precedent. It undermines the intent of the National Historic Preservation Act, passed by Congress to protect our cultural resources, and the democratic ideal that the views of the public are essential to informed federal decision making.

We urge the NCPC to exercise its mandated authority and meet its stated mission to "to preserve and enhance the extraordinary historical, cultural, and natural resources and federal assets of the National Capital Region, to support the needs of the federal government and enrich the lives of the region's visitors, workers, and residents."[3] This project falls short on multiple fronts and NCPC should not grant its final approval.

Sincerely,



Priya Jain, AIA
Chair, Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) Heritage Conservation Committee
Members, SAH Heritage Conservation Committee: Fallon Samuels Aidoo, Ph.D.; Kathryn E. Holliday, Ph.D., Margarita Jerabek, Ph.D., Daniel Leckie, PMP, Mary Rzepczynski, Shuyi Yin, Ph.D., Günce Uzgören, Ph.D.
Ben Thomas, Ph.D. (ex-officio)

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[1] Priya Jain (and Society of Architectural Historians Heritage Conservation Committee) to William Scharf (National Capital Planning Commission), June 1, 2026, https://sah.org/2026/06/02/sah-statement-on-proposed-monumental-arch-in-memorial-circle-in-washington-dc/ (accessed June 2, 2026), and July 8, 2026, https://sah.org/2026/07/08/sah-submits-comments-to-national-capital-planning-commission-regarding-proposed-monumental-arch-project/ (accessed Nov 4, 2026).
[2] National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, *Truimphal Arch at Memorial Circle: Assessment of Effects Report*, June 2026, https://www.ncpc.gov/files/download.php?id=7862 (accessed June 22, 2026).
[3] National Capital Planning Commission, "Mission Statement," https://www.ncpc.gov/about/ (accessed Nov 4, 2026).

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.

Bryan Clark Green, Ph.D.

5 November 2026

Prepared Testimony — National Capital Planning Commission

Re: NCPC File No. 8778 — Memorial Circle, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Columbia Island — New Monumental Arch

Chair Paoletta, members of the Commission. I'm Bryan Clark Green, an architectural historian from Richmond, speaking as a private citizen. Others will speak about Arlington and the lost views, and I share their concern. I'll address one finding and one omission.

The recommendation asks you to find that Congress implicitly waived the Height of Buildings Act in 1925. Interior calls the authorization explicit. Staff calls it implicit. The act, as Interior quotes it, covers a bridge and its landscape features. It never mentions height.

The recommendation also states that you rely on Interior to decide whether the Commemorative Works Act is applicable to this situation. This implies that the 1925 act counts as authority when it excuses a height limit but goes unexamined when a statute requires Congress. Arlington County and the veterans have sued over exactly that, and now the Commonwealth of Virginia and the District of Columbia have too. Your finding would give the government's theory an endorsement it hasn't earned.

Interior's own history undercuts the theory. The Bridge Commission, which held the discretion Congress granted, removed the columns in the early 1930s over aircraft safety. They weren't postponed. They were abandoned. And this Commission's own 2001 Memorials and Museums Master Plan rules out Memorial Circle for a memorial.

Now the omission. Interior calls the arch an ornament, with human use incidental. On October 28, however, the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security swore in federal court that it is a defense asset, and that its height gives an elevation advantage. Nothing in the submission mentions

military use. A ticketed public observation deck cannot become a secure military post without significant changes to the building. Those changes aren't before you for consideration, however.

An implicit waiver would also outlive this project. Any future administration could cite it for any dormant plan in the capital.

The Commemorative Works Act says a memorial in this reserve may be built only as specifically authorized by law. Since 1986, more than forty memorials have come to Congress first, for just such authorization. Interior asks you to treat a 1925 bridge act as equal to Congressional approval. You don't have to decide whether it is. You only have to decline to act as if the question were settled, or even reasonable. I ask you to decline final approval. If you approve it anyway, strike the finding of implicit waiver and say plainly that you make no determination on congressional authorization. Congress wrote that rule so that no administration acting alone could decide what stands on this ground. A new Congress convenes in January. Don't write the exception before it arrives.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

NCPC November 5 Testimony

Susan Douglas, Third Act DMV

My testimony is being delivered from Memorial Circle.

So. We meet again.

This is my third time giving testimony to you, and I can't help but feel that my comments are falling on deaf ears. Yet I will continue to state my case for why Trump's vainglorious arch should never see the light of day.

There are so many reasons why I am opposed to this Arch. You have heard many of them before, but they warrant repeating, as they are no less important than the last time you heard them.

I am steadfastly opposed because I care deeply about preserving the peaceful, green, and open landscape of Memorial Circle.

What's more, we must preserve the hallowed grounds of Arlington National Cemetery where those who served our country are now laid to rest. I am disgusted that you would reduce the historical significance of the viewshed from Arlington House, across Memorial Bridge, to the Lincoln Memorial to a mere footnote in history books.

Traffic mayhem will result from years of construction at a busy Circle, only to be followed by hordes of tourists and countless tour buses, further extending the traffic pain.

Adding to the congestion of an already dangerously crowded airspace with a structure that defies the 1910 Height of Buildings Act passed by Congress is foolish. It is downright arrogant to ignore the Height of Buildings Act simply because it gets in the way of the project. That is not oversight or responsible planning, it's Machiavellianism.

I am outraged by the failure to secure the required Congressional approval for building on federal land, as well as the lack of an appropriation for construction. Any third grader will tell you this is called breaking the law. No doubt courts and lawmakers will take a dim view of this.

More recently, I am mightily perplexed by the suggestion that the vainglorious Arch will serve simultaneously as a gold-encrusted tourist attraction outfitted with a gift shop and viewing platform **and** as a military fortification equipped with snipers, drones and live munitions. It is difficult to see this as anything more than the fever dream of a self-aggrandizing tyrant, and you are merely the court jesters entertaining his majesty.

The people have made clear that they do not want this Arch. Since early spring, there have been protests, rallies, testimony, and written comments in opposition. There can be no mistake

about our position. Over 100,000 written comments from around the country have been shared with the National Park Service alone, the vast majority of which expressed disapproval.

I am troubled by the glib manner in which this Commission is conducting the approval process for the Arch. This project must be subjected to the same careful, obligatory review and years' long deliberation that other monuments are subject to. Instead, this project is being carelessly rushed through in a matter of months, sidestepping traditional review processes.

Chairman Paoletta, you stated publicly that you plan to approve the Arch, a claim you made some time ago and without benefit of the findings that were made available tonight. That kind of hubris to rush through a pet project for Trump is galling to say the least.

Hubris, corruption, self-aggrandizement, abuse of power, and your creative interpretation of historic preservation and environmental regulations - all in the name of rushing this project through to completion - these simply will not be tolerated.

We saw clearly on Tuesday night just how the American people feel about contempt for the democracy that our nation was founded on.

Let there be no mistake that democracy prevailed this week, and it will continue to prevail, especially in the face of a project such as this. The Arch is illegal, it is obscene, it is nothing more than a monument by and for a leader whose legacy will be vilified, as will those who support him.

Testimony on the New Monumental Arch at Memorial Circle

National Capital Planning Commission, File 8778, November 5, 2026

Chair and members of the Commission, my name is Dennis Findley. I am an architect in McLean, Virginia, and a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. For 37 years, I have crossed Memorial Bridge more times than I can count. I oppose approval of the arch.

Memorial Bridge was the final link in one of America's great ceremonial compositions, more than a century in the making.

Arlington House, finished in 1818, was sited so its great Doric portico could be seen from Washington. The McMillan Plan of 1902 drew an axis from that house to the site of the Lincoln Memorial, dedicated in 1922. The 1924 bridge plan the administration cites proposed two slender columns to frame that view, not an arch to block it. Memorial Bridge opened in 1932, deliberately kept low and horizontal. Nothing was meant to stand between the house and Lincoln. Since 1963, President Kennedy's eternal flame has kept vigil on that axis, just below the house. For decades I have watched it from the bridge at night. His grave was placed to look out across the river to Lincoln. The arch would rise in the middle of both views, overwhelming what generations so carefully shaped and preserved.

At 250 feet, the arch would be more than twice the height of the Lincoln Memorial and directly on that axis. Even Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe is only 164 feet tall, and it stands where twelve grand avenues meet. In Paris, the arch is the destination. Here, the destinations are Lincoln and Arlington House, and this arch would stand between them. From the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington House would be reduced to a keyhole view through the arch.

The arch would also change what Arlington National Cemetery means. The final plans call it a "ceremonial gateway," and the Interior Department says it will "enhance the visitor experience" at Arlington "for veterans, [and] the families of the fallen." I am the son of a disabled Korean War veteran. His war ended not in triumph but in stalemate. I have often stood graveside at Arlington with grieving families. What I witnessed there had nothing to do with triumph. It was about loss. Triumphal arches were built in the name of victory, but from Rome to Napoleon's Paris they honored the ruler who built them. Arlington is about no one person. It belongs to those who served, and too often gave everything. Arlington already has a ceremonial gateway. It is Memorial Bridge.

The administration has told a federal court that construction could begin as early as the day of your vote. Two federal lawsuits are pending, and Congress has not authorized this arch under the Commemorative Works Act. There is no reason to rush. I ask the Commission to deny final approval or, at a minimum, defer it until those questions are resolved.

Great civic landscapes endure because each generation acts as a steward, not an author. I ask you to be stewards. Thank you.

Dennis Findley, FAIA · Studio Findley Design, PLLC, McLean, Virginia

MEG MAGUIRE

Washington, DC 20016

Testimony to NCPC on the proposed ARCH
November 5, 2026

Mr. Chairman and Members of the NCPC Board: Good afternoon. I am Meg Maguire, a past President of Scenic America and Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

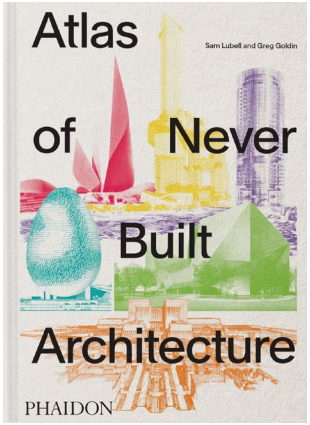
Today you are considering approval of a massive, out-of-scale, view-blocking, shadow-casting, history-mocking, self-promoting, irreverent, narcissistic deification of Donald J. Trump.

A vote to approve this monstrosity will ensure that you are forever scorned as an *American Heritage Desecrator* who

- **Misspent $100 million of public funding in defiance of the testimony of all credible experts in historic preservation, scenic conservation, architecture, urban design, planning, and good governance;**
- **Unlawfully defied Congress and trampled the Commemorative Works Act, NEPA and Sec. 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act;**
- **Trivialized the objection of veterans who view Memorial Circle as the entry to the sacred Arlington National Cemetery rather than a tourist overlook for intrusive gawking, or a perch for snipers; and**
- **Mocked the American public that on November 3, 2026 expressed revulsion at the pattern of official corruption of which this structure is a prime example.**

Today you have an opportunity to distinguish yourselves as true patriots and public servants by opposing this disgusting project. In the immortal words of Nancy Reagan – *Just Say No!*

Fortunately, there is an appropriate place for the Arch in world history:



Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Testimony to the National Capital Planning Commission
Project: New Monumental Arch (File number 8778)
Hearing: November 5, 2026
Position: I oppose the construction of the Monumental Arch at Memorial Circle

The Department of the Interior has submitted to the NCPC its Monumental Arch plans, which have the objective of *beautifying public spaces and generating citizenry pride in and respect for our Nation, promoting beautification and the preservation of our history and heritage.* To me, nothing speaks of beautification and preservation more than chain-sawing native trees and erecting a traffic-clogging 250' Gaudiesque Monumental Arch bleaching the night skies with continuous floodlighting by searchlight projectors and housing snipers and military drones, modeled on the gilded statuary of the Chateau de Versailles. It's fitting that Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette holed up in Versailles as the commoners in Paris revolted over the price of bread and later lost their heads over their failure to listen to the people. I think that the November 3rd election results show that the American people have rejected crumbs from this administration.

The National Park Service (NPS) oversees some of the most breathtaking landscapes in the world. But this administration has starved it of funding and resources. I personally have spoken with a National Park Ranger who was tasked with cleaning toilets and emptying garbage bins rather than leading nature programs and hikes because staffing at that site had been halved and there was no one else to do the work. I think it's shameful that our national parks are being starved for resources, while funds for vanity projects abound. NCPC Chair Paoletta may intend to rubber stamp approval of this tribute to tyranny, but the other members of this Commission have the opportunity to show spine, read the room, and say, "NO!"

Jackie Rivas
November 2026

November 5, 2026
National Park and Planning Commission meeting review of Memorial Arch

My name is Laura Welch and I will speak against the building of this arch on Memorial Circle. I have lived in the Washington DC area most of my life. Often when we have visitors we take them on a tour of the monuments around the Tidal Basin. This tour includes standing by the Lincoln Memorial looking across the Memorial Bridge to the Arlington National Cemetery, where service members from every one of America's major wars have been buried. The magnificent view connects these very important memorials of American history around the time of the Civil War.

The property that became Arlington Cemetery belonged to the family of Robert E Lee at the beginning of the Civil War. After the Lees abandoned the property at the start of the Civil War, the U.S. Army seized the estate in 1861 because it was a very strategic location from which to defend Washington, D.C.

Union leaders were concerned that Robert E Lee would reclaim his property after the war. Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs decided that the best way to ensure the cemetery's permanence was to bury soldiers as close to the main house as possible, and in August of 1864, two dozen soldiers were buried next to Lee's rose garden. Lee never reclaimed the land.

The Civil War was a key turning point in American history. Before the Civil War, the concept of liberty and justice for all had little meaning unless you were white and male. The Civil War abolished slavery and then led to the passage of the 14th and 15th amendments which extended citizenship and voting rights to minority groups.

Standing at the Lincoln Memorial we can imagine our great president Lincoln recalling the agonizing war fought to protect the United States, and from his viewpoint surveying how many lives were lost to do so. Washington is a city of vistas and sightlines; few are more sacred than this one. To protect this specific vista Gilmore D. Clarke, chair of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, convinced FDR not to build the Pentagon at Arlington Farms because it would have obliterated the backdrop of tiered headstones and Arlington House. Why would the people of the United States want to give up this precious view now, and the history of which it reminds us, for a construction that has no meaning to us?

The public money to be spent on the arch would be better spent supporting service members and military families with enhanced pay and benefits. In 2022, DoD reported that nearly one in four military families (24%) were experiencing food insecurity. And

nearly eighty percent (79.8%) of respondents were paying more than they can comfortably afford to cover housing, rent, or utility payments. Surveys find that increased pay and benefits would help retention of service members. Instead of supporting our troops we build an arch?

The arch should not be built.

Laura Welch
Takoma Park, MD

Written testimony for the National Capital Planning Commission

Meeting: Thursday, November 5, 2026, 1:00 pm ET, online

Item: Monumental Arch at Memorial Circle, final site and building plans (File 8778)

Submitted by: Ed Higgins, United States Marine Corps veteran

Position: Opposed to the final site and building plans

My name is Ed Higgins. I am a United States Marine Corps veteran, and I am part of the planning group behind Stop the Arch, the veterans and military families who stood in silence at Arlington on October 27 and 28.

I am not here against monuments. I have stood in formation at the Memorial Bridge end of Memorial Circle. I know what that ground is for. It is the front door to Arlington National Cemetery, where this country buries its war dead. Everything about that place speaks in a low voice. The rows of headstones. The changing of the guard. The silence that settles over you the moment you cross the river.

A 250 foot triumphal arch at Memorial Circle would speak over all of it. At 25 stories, it would tower over the approach to the cemetery and compete with the Lincoln Memorial across the river. That is not honoring the fallen. That is using their ground as a backdrop.

The men and women buried at Arlington did not ask to be part of anyone's legacy project. Their families come to that circle to grieve and to remember, in quiet. A triumphal arch celebrates the power of the living. Arlington honors the sacrifice of the dead. Those two things do not belong on the same ground, and putting them there anyway tells every veteran watching that our sacred places are available for decoration.

I took an oath to the Constitution. That oath has no expiration date, and it includes defending what this country sets aside for its dead. I am asking this commission to vote no on the final site and building plans for the Monumental Arch at Memorial Circle. If a monument is to be built, let it stand somewhere that does not borrow its meaning from the graves of the fallen.

Thank you for your time, and for letting a veteran be heard on the record.

Testimony of Richard Silverman

Before the National Capital Planning Commission

Project: New Monumental Arch (File Number 8778)

November 5, 2026

I am Richard Silverman. I am testifying on my own behalf, but I trust I am giving voice to the thousands upon thousands who served our nation and now lay silent in peaceful repose within the hallowed grounds of Arlington National Cemetery.

I leave it to others to explain the numerous legal, safety, aesthetic, and other reasons why this proposed arch should be voted down by the Commission. I am focusing my remarks on the personal toll this proposed edifice will have on those who come to visit here.

I come from a military family. My father was a career Army Master Sergeant. He was a disabled combat infantryman who fought in the Battle of the Bulge and the Korean War. I was a Captain in the U.S. Army serving on active duty in the Republic of Korea when I received a call that my father had passed away. I came home on a 30-day emergency leave to bury him at Arlington. At that time, 1969, he was the last serviceman buried in a largely empty section. I returned home a year later to a mass of gleaming white, simple headstones…row after row, after row.

On one visit, I was returning to my car when I noticed a gentleman sitting on a collapsible chair and leaning his cheek on the headstone in front of him. His entire body was quivering as he sobbed uncontrollably. I went over and gently placed my hand on his shoulder. I said nothing. I just wanted him to know he was not alone in his grief.

As I stood there, I noticed a bottle of Jack Daniels and two glasses placed on the grave. After a few moments passed, he explained that this annual visit was on his son's birthday. You see…it was out of that bottle that they proposed a toast to his son's future return as he prepared to deploy to Vietnam. They never got to share another drink. The bottle remained nearly full.

This father…this son…my father and countless others do not deserve for one moment to have a shadow cast upon their graves by this proposed arch. Nothing should intrude on the serenity of this hallowed place. Let those who come to visit those who died while serving their beloved nation pass by an unadorned, uninterrupted circle that serves as the entryway to Arlington National Cemetery. This should be an entryway of peace and respect with an unobstructed view of the American flag at half staff in front of the Curtis-Lee mansion. That flag signifies that other burials are taking place that day. Let it remain a serene entryway to this hallowed ground.

I urge this Commission, and especially those who are veterans, to exert their independence and do the right thing by not approving construction of this arch. In so doing, you are truly honoring our country's fallen heroes.

Robert Wald
November 4, 2026

National Capital Planning Commission
New Monumental Arch Testimony: Unfavorable/Opposed

I am opposed to the building of a new monumental arch at Memorial Circle for environmental, historical, and safety reasons.

You will hear ample testimony from others who share these concerns. Today I would like to make a moral appeal and acknowledge that you and your family members may be facing threats of physical harm if you vote against building President Trump's arch.

Now is the time to be brave.

What will you tell your grandchildren when they ask what you did when you served on the Commission and had to decide on the arch. That you were too scared to do what was right? Or will you be able to tell them that you were scared but you knew you had to be brave and vote no? I hope the latter.

I also want to remind you that in 2027, Congress will conduct investigations into Executive Branch corruption. We don't yet know where those investigations will lead, but it's possible they will lead to the planning and coordination of construction of the arch. That's another reason to vote not to approve construction of the monumental arch.

Testimony Before the National Capital Planning Commission
Rebecca Miller, Executive Director, DC Preservation League

New Monumental Arch - NCPC File Number: 8778

The DC Preservation League (DCPL) submits this formal statement of opposition to the proposed Arch at Memorial Circle, in Washington, DC. DCPL has many objections to this proposal, many you have heard or will hear today concerning the adverse effects of this structure, but will focus its comments on the Arch's violation of the 1910 Height of Buildings Act.

While civic monuments are central to the identity of the nation's capital, the proposed Arch directly undermines the federal statutory protections that have preserved Washington's low-scale, horizontal character and light-filled vistas for over a century.

We urge the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) to reject this proposal because it directly violates the 1910 Height of Buildings Act and because the October 2, 2026 unsigned Department of Interior's "Height of Buildings Act Justification" submission to NCPC presents flawed legal and administrative reasoning.

The 1901 McMillan Plan and the 1910 Height of Buildings Act are the two foundational pillars that define the physical aesthetic and legal structure of modern Washington, DC. While one was an urban design vision, the 1910 Height Act provides the statutory muscle to enforce this vision so that no building or structure could compete with civic monuments for prominence.

The controlling statutory authority is the Height of Buildings Act of 1910, which comprehensively amended, superseded, and replaced the operative height framework established by the earlier Height of Buildings Act of 1899. Congress specifically enacted the 1910 statute to establish a more stringent, street-width-proportional standard (capping heights at the width of the adjacent street plus 20 feet up to absolute maximums) and to resolve legal ambiguities left open by the 1899 text. Under long-standing statutory interpretation and administrative law principles, when Congress enacts comprehensive replacement legislation on the same subject, the later statute governs.

Any legal review of the proposed Arch must be evaluated exclusively under the enforceable standards, formulas, and narrow exceptions outlined in the 1910 Act, making any reliance on or reference to the obsolete 1899 standards legally invalid. The proposed Arch exceeds allowable statutory limits and introduces a structure that intrudes upon and disrupts historic viewsheds across the Federal City.

To be clear, the 1910 Act is explicitly narrow regarding what may extend beyond standard height envelopes. The specific exceptions allowed under federal law include:

Fay Armstrong, *President* | Greta Fuller, Vice *President* | Howard S. Berger, *Treasurer* | Melissa Cohen, FAIA, LEED AP, *Secretary* | John DeFerrari, *At Large*
Jill S. Cavanaugh, FAIA, AICP | Scott DeMartino, Esq. | Katie Irwin, AIA, IIDA, LEED AP | Rob McClennan, AIA
D. Peter Sefton | James W. Shepherd, AIA, LEED | Joseph E. Taylor, AIA | Benjamin L. Williams, Esq., LEED AP | Juliet Zucker

- Non-Habitable Architectural Appurtenances: Spires, domes, towers, minarets, and pinnacles (such as church steeples or decorative spires).
- Essential Building Services: Mechanical penthouses, elevator shafts, ventilation shafts, chimneys, smokestacks, and fire sprinkler tanks.
- Habitable Penthouse Occupancy (2014 Amendment): Human occupancy within penthouse structures set back from the exterior walls, permitted exclusively following a statutory amendment by Congress (Pub. L. 113–103).

The proposed Arch falls into none of these established statutory categories. It is not a secondary appurtenance, a mechanical service enclosure, or a penthouse setback. Attempting to squeeze a standalone, primary monumental structure into these narrow statutory carve-outs sets a dangerous precedent, opens the door to incremental skyward expansion, and erodes the unique civic character mandated by federal law.

The unsigned DOI determination that the Arch can proceed without violating or triggering Congressional review of the Height Act rests on fundamentally flawed legal analysis.

The NCPC has explicitly recognized in its past reviews—most notably during the joint 2012–2014 Height Master Plan Study and subsequent 2014 Congressional amendment regarding penthouse occupancies (Pub. L. 113–103)—that any modification, exception, or circumvention of the height rules established by the 1910 Act requires formal Congressional action.

During those comprehensive prior reviews, the NCPC conducted extensive legal and urban design analyses confirming:

- The 1910 Height Act is a federal statute enacted by Congress, not a flexible local administrative regulation that federal agencies can bypass at will.
- Past exceptions to the Act—such as statutory amendments for specific buildings in the early 20th century or the 2014 penthouse revision—were enacted exclusively through explicit Acts of Congress.
- The NCPC's authority under the Height Act is limited to enforcing and implementing its limits, not to unilaterally grant exemptions for overheight structures or reclassify major monumental arches to skirt statutory definitions.

By failing to apply the strict statutory interpretation established in its own previous reviews, the NCPC is committing a clear administrative error. The agency cannot affirm that Congress holds exclusive jurisdiction over height modifications and then later assert that a disruptive monument can bypass statutory limits without explicit Congressional authorization.

Protecting Washington's monumental core depends on strict adherence to the Height of Buildings Act of 1910. The current NCPC review disregards established agency precedent, misinterprets federal statutory limits, and risks compromising the spatial integrity of the nation's capital.

The DC Preservation League calls on the NCPC to find that the Arch, as proposed, does not comply with the Height of Buildings Act of 1910 and to reject the design in its current form. Any proposal seeking to exceed statutory height thresholds must be submitted directly to the United States Congress for legislative review.

Thank you for considering the views of the DC Preservation League.

Rebecca Miller
Executive Director
DC Preservation League

Testimony of US Army Colonel (Retired) Ann Wright

For the National Capital Planning Commission meeting on November 5, 2026

concerning the construction of an Arch

My name is Ann Wright. I served 29 years in the U.S. Army and Army Reserves and retired as a Colonel. I was also a U.S. diplomat and served 16 years in U.S. Embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. I worked in the federal government under eight Presidential administrations beginning with Lyndon Johnson.

I represent Veterans For Peace Chapter 113-Hawai'i.

For President Donald Trump to build a monument to himself, for that is exactly what it would be, is a sacrilege to both the history of the bridge and to the history of Arlington National Cemetery to which the Memorial Bridge leads, a place, as a retired U.S. Army Colonel, I hold with special reverence as such an important part of our nation's history.

Arlington National Cemetery contains the remains of many generations of military members and their families. "Bonespurs" Trump, who got five deferments for military service, has referred to those, like myself who did serve in the military as "losers and suckers" and was especially disparaging to U.S. prisoners of war, such as Senator and Presidential candidate John McCain.

Veterans and military families have been outspoken in their condemnation of the Ego Arch. Three Vietnam veterans, representing millions of veterans, filed a lawsuit against the construction of the Arch.

I feel so strongly about the arch being a slap in the face of all U.S. citizens, but particularly of veterans, that I flew from my home in Honolulu, Hawaii to participate in twice a day protests at Memorial Circle for a week, from September 14-18, 2026. If I hadn't needed to return home for obligations, I would have been at the Circle every day to join the daily protests which have taken place for 52 days.

I strongly believe it is our responsibility as educated citizens to challenge any attempt by this administration, or any administration, to rewrite the history of the Memorial Bridge which Trump is doing with the Arch.

Arlington Bridge and the Memorial Circle are symbols of the reunification of the States of the nation after the Civil War which was fought to end the horrors of slavery in our country.

We have seen that Trump‘s cultural war on the history of the United States has already resulted in dramatic changes in the wording on many historical exhibits at the Smithsonian Museum, particularly those that describe the horrific effects of slavery on our nation.

In July 2025, President Trump ordered warning signs and exhibits installed outside the Smithsonian Museum of American History to attempt to convince the public that the museum does not accurately reflect American history. Trump called the museum’s portrayal of US history as too focused on “how bad slavery was.”

An arch created by, and essentially for, President Trump would always carry the connotation of his well-known racist beliefs, articulated by himself in his terrible comments on people and countries of color, and would be a dagger in the heart of the true history of the United States and in the hearts of those women and men who have served, and died, in the U.S. military.

Recognizing the massive defeat of Trump and his agenda in the vote of the American people only 2 days ago, I appeal to the members of the commission to reject this proposal of an Arch on Memorial Circle, an arch built for the ego of racist Donald Trump.

The American people told Trump and his administration through this election that they reject his war on Iran, tariffs on much of the countries of the world resulting high prices of every product sold in the U.S. and wasteful, unnecessary massive expenditures on Trump's other vanity projects such as the East Wing of the White House, the helicopter pad at the White House and the vandalism done by the administration to the Kennedy Center and to the public golf course on Haines Point. I appeal to you members of the commission to show the same integrity as the American people and reject this vanity, ego Arch proposed by Donald Trump.

As a veteran, I proudly returned from Hawai’i to the Memorial Circle on November 2 and plan to remain here until the proposal of Trump’s EGO Arch is “dead and buried”… in order to leave those dead and buried in Arlington National Cemetery in peace and quiet.

My name is Marilyn Quagliotti. I am a retired Major General of the United States Army. I am here to state my opposition to the building of the proposed Triumphal Arch at the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery.

It is fair to ask why a retired officer would object to a triumphal arch which has been used to commemorate military conquests and victories throughout the ages. The short answer is that I do not object to the Arch itself; I object to its location. To illustrate why, I will employ an analogy from the history of one of the units I had the honor of serving with, the 8th Infantry Division. In WW II this Division captured the city of Brest, France. As the German Commander emerged to surrender after several days of intense combat, he was met by an American Brigadier General in dirty Battle Dress accompanied by a squad of battle fatigued infantrymen. The German General was enraged at the prospect of surrendering to this motley crew led by a relatively junior officer. He demanded to see their credentials. The American General pointed to his exhausted Infantryman, and replied, "These are my Credentials".

That phrase became the motto of the 8th Infantry Division. It recognizes the victory at Brest resulted from the valor and sacrifices of the individual soldier. And so should it be with this proposed Triumphal Arch in Washington DC. It may well be appropriate to honor American Triumphs with a magnificent arch but not at the expense of those who achieved those triumphs by their sacrifices. Like those World War II soldiers, the enablers of our American triumphs are buried in the hallowed ground on the hillsides of Arlington Cemetery looking down on the US Capital city. These are our credentials. Do not obscure their sacrifice with a Triumphal Arch. Such an Arch should exist in the shadow of this Hallowed Ground not the other way around. On behalf of those generations of heroes, I respectively recommend you build this Arch elsewhere. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

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

Testimony to the National Capital Planning Commission

Project: New Monumental Arch (File number 8778)

Hearing: November 5, 2026

Rev. Alexa Fraser, Rockville, Maryland

My name is Rev. Alexa Fraser, from Rockville, Maryland.

I grew up in DC and was taken to then National airport as a family outing. I recall it before the main building was enlarged and before there was a second terminal. I have roots here and love my city and its heritage. I want it to be responsible and, above all, safe: safe for the passengers and crews who fly in and out every day, for the families who live and play near the runway, and for the many legislators who use this airport regularly.

As an adult I've enjoyed time near the airport at Gravelly Point Park, at the end of the runway, where my son loved to go for the full airplane landing experience. I've seen how quickly the planes come in and know there is no room for error in those landings.

I've also flown in and out of that airport for close to 70 years. I've flown in rain, snow, ice and windy conditions. I know that descent is already challenging and aviation safety experts have spoken:

• Tom Lintner, 30 years in aviation safety at the Federal Aviation Administration and before that an air traffic controller at LaGuardia, says that in this airspace "there aren't enough seconds left to make the right decision," and that added complexity is "the last thing this area needs."

• Jeff Guzzetti, retired accident investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration, says the arch would sit a few hundred yards to the right of the approach path to the airport's main runway: "The best, and the most basic option, is simply not to build it." And: "This is just adding another hazard."

• Shawn Pruchnicki, former airline pilot and accident investigator who teaches aviation safety at The Ohio State University, calls the arch "inherently dangerous," and says a plane flying low in strong easterly winds "could easily get blown into" it.

• Emily Hanoka, an air traffic controller in the Reagan National tower, told 60 Minutes that currently, before the arch is in place, about half the experienced controllers who come there to train look at the operation and withdraw: "Absolutely not."

And of course we have the helicopters. Here I don’t have an expert’s words, but the reality of a January 2025 midair collision. Helicopters here can fly as low as 200 feet, below the arch's 250 feet. That midair collision over the Potomac killed 67 people. That could have been me or you.

And I understand that you are not voting on the full plan. The President has said this arch will be a military complex with snipers and drones. The plans before you leave that out, but the White House says details of a national security component may yet be released at a later date, and the Interior Department says the design can accommodate it. I don't see how you can vote on a plan that is not final.

This project is dangerous. It is neither safe nor responsible, and it should not move forward.

Public Testimony of Tom Bayer, Alexandria, VA, to the National Capital Planning Commission meeting on November 5, 2026, regarding *NCPC File Number: 8778--New Monumental Arch*

Good afternoon, commissioners, my name is Tom Bayer, and I am a resident of Alexandria, Virginia. Two evenings ago, I drove around the Lincoln Memorial and across Memorial Bridge. With little traffic on the road, I slowed briefly as I crossed the bridge to take in one of the most remarkable views in our region: Arlington House rising above Arlington National Cemetery and the flicker of the John F. Kennedy Eternal Flame below. The view was simple, dignified, and profoundly moving. Shrouded in cool and somber darkness, appropriate to such sacred surroundings, it conveyed exactly what this landscape was intended to convey: reflection, remembrance, and national purpose.

Considering that historic vista, I found myself imagining how it would appear dominated by a massive, illuminated arch crowned by a competing flame. The jarring contrast raised concern that a nationally significant landscape could be fundamentally altered without sufficient regard for its historic character or for the widespread public opposition that this proposal continues to generate.

In daytime or nighttime, traveling west from the Lincoln Memorial across Memorial Bridge offers a view that inspires solemn introspection in consideration of the ultimate price paid by our nation during the Civil War and by the countless Americans who have served and sacrificed in conflicts around the world.

Traveling east from the cemetery entrance fills one with pride in our nation, as Memorial Bridge leads the eye toward the Lincoln Memorial, shining in the morning sun or glowing through the night as a beacon to peace and humanity.

These westward and eastward vistas take on even greater significance when one reflects on the two leaders honored at either end of this historic landscape. Both guided the nation through moments of profound challenge, and both were taken from us before their time.

This view is not accidental. The relationship between the Lincoln Memorial, Memorial Bridge, Arlington House, Arlington Cemetery, and the Eternal Flame creates one of the nation's most important commemorative landscapes. The power of the setting comes not from a single monument, but from the careful balance among them.

An oversized arch supporting monumental statuary and combining spectator overlooks of sacred burial rituals with the storage and operation of instruments of war, would transform this place of reflection, remembrance, and national unity into an incongruous spectacle. Rather than complementing the existing memorials, it would compete with them, erasing the clarity and dignity of the historic composition.

Those entrusted with stewardship of this nationally significant landscape have an obligation to protect it for future generations. This proposal does not enhance the historic axis between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington Cemetery; it diminishes it. We can do better. This commission can do better. America deserves better.

Oral and Written Testimony of Torey Carter-Conneen, Hon. ASLA
Chief Executive Officer of the American Society of Landscape Architects
Before the National Capitol Planning Commission
On the United States Department of the Interior, Memorial Avenue, Washington, DC – New Monumental Arch (NCPC File Number 8778)
November 5, 2026

Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the Commission.

My name is Torey Carter-Conneen, and I serve as Chief Executive Officer of the American Society of Landscape Architects, also known as ASLA. ASLA represents more than 17,000 landscape architects who plan and design infrastructure projects nationwide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

ASLA strongly opposes the proposed Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle and respectfully urges the Commission not to approve the final site and building plans.

This project would permanently alter one of our nation's most significant historic landscapes, disrupt important viewsheds, and diminish the historic relationships connecting Arlington National Cemetery to the monumental core of Washington, D.C.

These impacts are not speculative.

Recently, the National Park Service, through its own review, formally identified adverse effects on historic properties associated with the proposed arch.[1]

NPS identified 42 historic properties within the project's area of potential effects, including six National Historic Landmarks and eight cultural landscapes. Its assessment determined that the proposed arch would adversely affect nationally significant historic resources.

These include Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington Memorial Bridge, Arlington House, the Lincoln Memorial Cultural Landscape, and the National Mall Historic District.

[1] National Park Service, *Triumphal Arch Assessment of Effect (Revised)*, August 28, 2026, https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=153235.

As you know, the National Historic Preservation Act establishes a clear responsibility for federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties. Section 106 requires meaningful consideration of adverse effects, while Section 110(f) establishes a heightened responsibility to minimize harm to National Historic Landmarks to the maximum extent possible.[2]

These protections are particularly important for a project of this scale and significance.

As recently as September 24, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation abruptly terminated consultation on the proposed Section 106 agreement, acknowledging significant public concerns about the project.[3]

This history alone should give the Commission pause as it considers final approval.

For many, including the landscape architecture community, the Memorial Avenue Corridor is far more than a roadway or a collection of monuments. It is a carefully designed commemorative landscape where open space, sightlines, and visual connections are essential to its historic character.

Siting memorials in public spaces should be done with careful and deliberate review to help ensure the preservation of the public realm, respect for the significance of the proposed memorial, and its relationship to any existing memorials.[4]

The proposed 250-foot arch would introduce a massive structure into this setting, permanently interrupting the visual relationships between Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington Memorial Bridge, and the Lincoln Memorial.

Viewsheds are not simply aesthetic features. They are defining elements of historic landscapes that shape how people experience and understand these important places.

And once these views are lost, they cannot be fully restored.

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[2] National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Pub. L. No. 89-665, § 106, 80 Stat. 915, 917 (1966) (codified as amended at 54 U.S.C. § 306108). https://uscode.house.gov/us/usc/119-120/t54/s306108

[3] Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, "ACHP Announces Termination of Section 106 Consultation on Triumphal Arch Project," September 24, 2026. https://www.achp.gov/news/achp-announces-termination-section-106-consultation-triumphal-arch-project

[4] American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), Memorials, Public Policy Statement (2018). https://www.asla.org/getcontentasset/635ab5c2-891f-4a64-8c38-8b7ac8a4b5ae/547f34a1-c94b-4748-b717-f9bca7683a68/memorials_2018.pdf

NPS's own assessment acknowledges that the submitted plans do not eliminate its adverse effects.[5] ASLA also believes the plans do not fully address the historic viewsheds and spatial relationships that would be altered by the proposed arch.

Landscape architects recognize that thoughtful design is not always about what we build—sometimes, it is about understanding what should remain untouched.

Washington's monumental landscape is a shared national treasure, shaped by generations of careful planning and stewardship. Its historic views, open spaces, and visual relationships deserve protection just as much as the monuments themselves.

ASLA urges the Commission to look beyond the proposed design and consider what its approval would mean for the long-term preservation and stewardship of our nation's capital.

The question before this Commission is not simply whether this arch can be built. It is whether it should be built at the expense of a historic place that is treasured and belongs to all Americans.

We urge you to choose protecting America's history and cultural heritage.

ASLA respectfully urges you to reject the request for approval of the final site and building plans for the proposed Triumphal Arch.

Thank you for your consideration.



Torey Carter-Conneen, Hon. ASLA
Chief Executive Officer
American Society of Landscape Architects

About ASLA: Founded in 1899, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) is the professional association for landscape architects in the United States, representing more than 17,000 members. Landscape architects lead the planning, design, and stewardship of healthy, equitable, safe, and resilient environments.

[5] National Park Service, Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle: Assessment of Effects Report (Revised), August 2026, p. 37, "Minimization and Mitigation." https://planning.nps.gov/showFile.cfm?projectID=136973&sfid=862935

Oral Testimony - Joel Mjolsness, Nov 5, 2026

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Joel Mjolsness. I am speaking today in my personal capacity as a retired US Army Infantry Officer from California.

During my 30 year Army career, I served two combat tours, was awarded the Bronze Star, and have the honor of being affiliated with the 3rd Infantry Regiment, The Old Guard, headquartered at Ft Myers. Throughout my military career, I have stood on the sacred turf of our national cemeteries to lay fellow soldiers to rest.

When you stand at a gravesite and hand a folded American flag to a grieving family member, you understand deeply what these grounds mean. Arlington National Cemetery is the ultimate symbol of that solemnity, sacrifice, and quiet dignity.

The historic approach along Memorial Avenue was designed with deliberate care, a post-Civil War axis of national reconciliation connecting Lincoln's memory directly to the fallen on the Virginia hills. Erecting a 250-foot arch at this location shatters that sacred dynamic. At over twice the height of the Lincoln Memorial, it visually dominates the corridor and turns a solemn path of remembrance into a monumental distraction.

Beyond the emotional and aesthetic impact, this proposal carries severe logistical and legal flaws:

- Public Safety & Aviation: Memorial Circle is already a heavily congested location in the heart of DC. A major attraction here will snarl traffic, impacting commuters to Reagan National Airport, and risking delays for emergency vehicles and funeral processions. Furthermore, a 250-foot structure in active DCA flight paths presents real aviation hazards that have not been properly studied.
- Procedural & Legal Violations: Major monuments in D.C. require explicit Congressional authorization under the Commemorative Works Act, which was bypassed here, alongside rushed, inadequate reviews under NEPA and the Historic Preservation Act.

Those who served were taught that military leadership is rooted in humility and putting the mission before self. Our national cemeteries reflect that same quiet grace.

I urge this Commission to uphold statutory protections, protect public safety, and preserve the solemnity of Arlington by rejecting approval for the proposed triumphal arch project at Memorial Circle. Thank you.

Anne Jaegerman Testimony

Many of you Commissioners are in a difficult position. You have been appointed by President Trump, to whom you may feel loyalty and affection. Yet this commission works for the citizens of the United States, and is expected, like all citizens, to respect the constitution and laws passed by Congress. Many experts and ordinary citizens have pointed out the many ways the current plan for the Arch violates legal, cultural and aesthetic laws and norms.

President Trump wants his Arch, and it seems that you would like to give it to him. I can think of 2 pathways for this to be accomplished legally and ethically. One path would be for President Trump's supporters to find a congressional sponsor. Like the supporters of other memorials, this group can lobby and fund-raise, and usher a bill to passage. Congress can vote to permit its construction on public land, and possibly designate funds to support it. The group can then work to see the project through the design and review processes. The recently opened Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial only took 16 years.

Another path is for such a group of supporters to purchase land, contribute funds and build whatever zoning allows on that private land. There are certainly many wealthy supporters of the President. Although zoning and environmental reviews would still be required, this path could result in a much speedier completion.

President Trump is not an easy man to say no to. However his impatience does not justify a rush to complete the planning and construction of an edifice that would long outlast his presidency.

Rather, it is those of us who oppose the Arch, the championship golf course, and the painting of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, who feel an urgent need to protect the public's legacy.

President Trump is not an easy man to say no to. Perhaps you can say, "not yet." As you no doubt will seriously consider all of our testimony today before you make a decision, I leave with you 2 questions.

As a commissioner, who do you work for?

And, in the future, when a different president has the power to appoint commissioners, how would you like them to behave?

To the Commissioners:

Thank you for taking my testimony. My name is Claudia Sherman. I have lived in the DMV for nearly 50 years and in the District itself for nearly 40. I am testifying today to register my very strong opposition to the proposed Monumental Arch.

In planning my testimony, I thought long and hard about what I could say that has not already been said. By its own report, this Commission had received over 1,300 comments as of the Executive Director's report date, and this does not include the comments submitted in connection with this meeting. The comments have overwhelmingly opposed the Arch. The reasons are numerous and as you well know, include objections to the truncated nature of this review process; the lack of Congressional approval; criticism of the size, design and location of the Arch; concerns about the disruption to the symbolic sight lines from the Lincoln Memorial to Arlington House; anger that the solemn and sacred nature of Arlington Memorial Cemetery will be disturbed by a gaudy tourist attraction; and very substantial vehicular, air and pedestrian safety concerns. You have received comments from historians, preservationists, architects, veterans and ordinary citizens such as me. The volume and specificity of the complaints are stunning. Yet the Executive Director's Report only notes their existence in passing and makes no attempt to address the merits of the comments or how they were weighed, if they were weighed.

My point is simple. Your website notes that you welcome public comment, but <u>why</u> do you welcome comment if your intent is to ignore it? The public is ill served by this charade of a process which is patently skewed to serve the wishes and narcissism of one man. This is a man who is not a resident of the District, who will soon be gone, and whose abiding interest is in glorifying himself, not in honoring the wishes of the community or the opinion of experts. This Arch and the process surrounding it are profoundly undemocratic. I urge the Commission to vote against its approval.

DarkSky International - DC Chapter
700 7th St. SW Ste 805
Washington DC 20024
www.darkskydc.org

November 3, 2026

Secretary
National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th St. NW
Washington DC 20004

Re: Commission Meeting of November 5, 2026

I will submit oral testimony regarding the proposed new Arch on behalf of the DarkSky DC Board of Directors. My written testimony is attached.

Jim Dougherty

Chair, DarkSky DC

202-607-7093

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Comments on Proposed Triumphal Arch

("New Monumental Arch" / NCPC File Number: 8778)

Submitted by
Jim Dougherty, Chair
DC Chapter, DarkSky International

November 4, 2026

SUMMARY OUTLINE:

I - BACKGROUND ON DARKSKY DC

II - PROBLEMS WITH THE PROPOSED LIGHTING REGIME

A, Under FAA Rules, the Arch Should Have Red "Obstruction Lights"
B. The Proposed Lighting Regime is Excessively Bright
C. The FAA's Bizarre Mandate to Require Placement of a "Non-Standard Eternal Flame" on the Arch.
D. The Proposed Light Color of 4000° K CCT is Unpleasant to the Eye, Will Increase Light Pollution, and Clearly Violates NCPC Regulations.
E. Upward-pointing Floodlights That Are Situated under the Landing Path to DCA Runway 19 Will Pose an Extreme Hazard to Air Navigation

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I BACKGROUND ON DARKSKY DC

DarkSky International (formerly known as the International Dark-Sky Association, or IDA) is a global non-profit organization founded in 1988. Its mission is to restore natural nighttime environments, combat light pollution, and protect the heritage of starry night skies for humans and wildlife.

DarkSky DC is a chapter of DarkSky International. Since 2009 our leadership has been a voice for controlling needless nighttime lighting. Earlier this year our team of advocates urged the NCPC to tone down the proposed uplighting of Union Station.

II. PROBLEMS WITH THE PROPOSED LIGHTING REGIME

A, The Arch Should be Equipped with Red "Obstruction Lights"

The Federal Aviation Administration ("FAA") has promulgated rules governing the placement and marking of obstructions that are erected along the landing paths to airfields. FAA AC 70/7640 1N (2026) (114 pp) ("FAA 7640"). Chapter 4 of these regulations prescribe "Lighting Standards."

Significantly, FAA 7640 contains this language regarding "obstruction lights" in urban areas:

Sec. 4.3.8. Obstruction Lights in Urban Areas. (p. 4-2)

*When a structure is located in an urban area where there are numerous other white lights (e.g., streetlights), red obstruction lights with appropriate marking or a medium-intensity **dual system** is recommended. (emphasis added)*

In other words, all potential hazards to aviation in urban areas should have either (1) red lights or (2) BOTH red lights and external white spotlighting. Musco's lighting plan doesn't comply. It proposes no red lights.

But it wasn't always so. On its initial review of the proposed lighting regime FAA demanded red lights for the arch. But, mysteriously, that requirement was waived after confidential interagency negotiations. (Reuters, Sept. 23). No reason was offered.

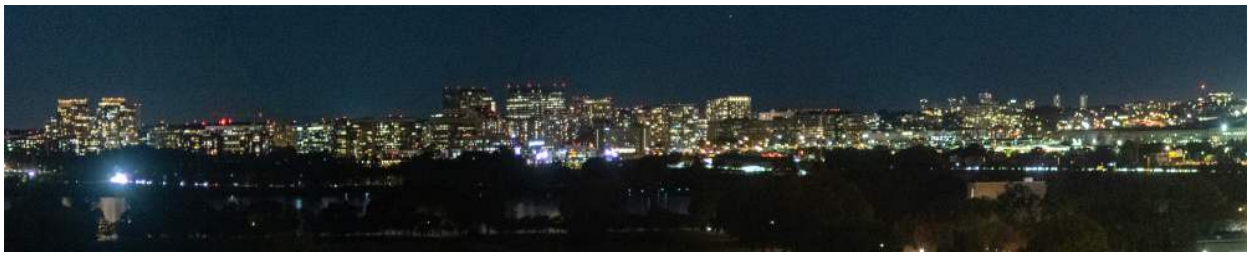
Red obstruction lights are normally required on structures near DCA, including the Washington Monument and the Capitol Power Plant. This has been mandated for scores of buildings, on both sides of the river, for a couple of miles north and south.



Here's an image of the skyline east of DCA, at the SWDC Wharf

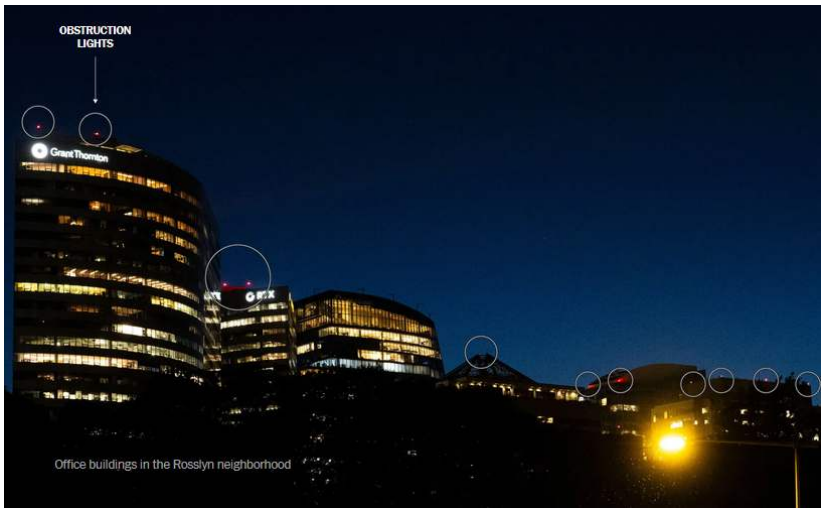
Here are two halves of an ultra-wide image of the skyline west of DCA, in Crystal City.





And here's an image of Rosslyn at night:

Scores of roofline red lights are visible in these images.

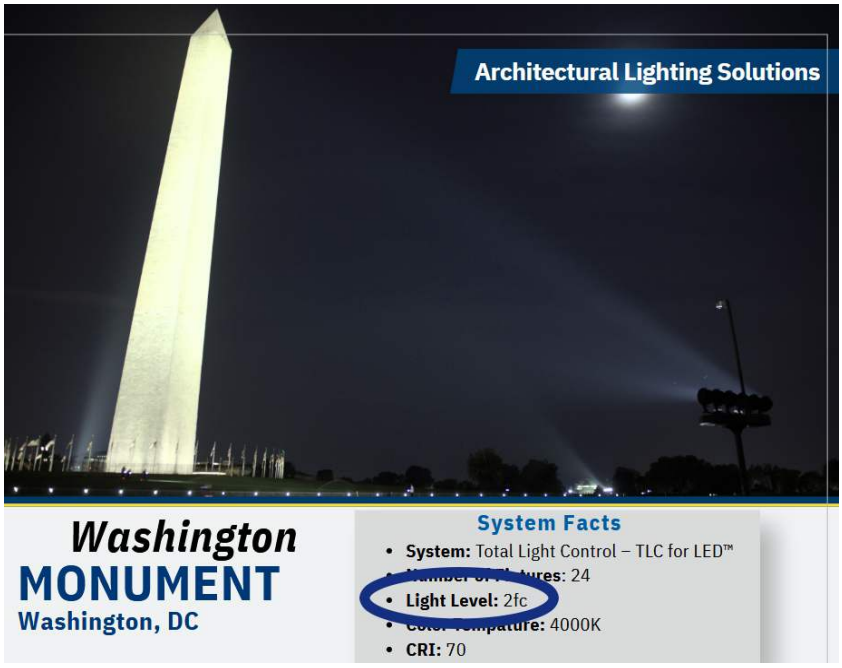


New York Times image

B. The Proposed Lighting Regime is Excessively Bright

We are unaware of regulatory limits on the amount of light that can be hurled at monuments – and, inevitably, into the night sky. We suggest this one: **none should be brighter than the Washington Monument**. The pre-eminent monument in Washington is – and will remain – the Washington Monument. New monuments should not be sized – or illuminated – to rival the Monument. But that appears to be what President Trump is attempting to do.

According to the lighting contractor that has been selected by the National Park Service ("NPS") – Musco Lighting – the average brightness of the Washington Monument is 2 foot-candles ("fc") The level of lighting allows it to be seen from Shenandoah National Park - 75 miles away.



However, NPS proposes to throw 7.5 times as much light on the granite faces of the arch – 15 fc!



Images and language copied from Musco's lighting plan cannot be cited as the document has no page numbers.

And the statuary **will receive even more light**, in part because of the planned placement of 116 floodlights on top of the granite/concrete structure – all pointed up into the night sky. This will yield thirty-eight foot-candles (19 times the brightness of the Washington Monument) on a gold-plated (highly reflective) surface 250 feet up in the air! This is far in excess of the regulatory prescription of 15 fc. One must suspect that a call for "More Light!" was received from a higher authority.



C. The FAA's Bizarre Mandate to Require Placement of a "Non-Standard Eternal Flame" on the Arch

The FAA's Determination of No Hazard to Air Navigation (8 pp.) was issued Sept. 18, 2026. Inexplicably it requires the arch to have a "non-standard" eternal flame on top to enhance visibility to "airmen." Condition #7, p. 7.:

7. CONDITIONS
The proposed structure should be appropriately marked/lighted with a non-standard eternal flame *and continuously floodlighted by searchlight projectors installed at three or more equidistant points around the base of the structure. The searchlight projectors should provide an average illumination of at least 15 foot-candles (161.46 lux) over the top one-third of the structure, in accordance with FAA AC 70/7460-1N, Paragraph 4.5, to make it more conspicuous to airmen.*

This makes little sense. We contend that, given:

- the vast amounts of light that will be showered on this vast (two-acre) canvas of high-albedo granite;
- the banks of lights that will be roof-mounted and concentrated upward on the golden statue,
- the array of six large banks of floodlights on the ground,
- all in all a total of more that 200 upward-pointing floodlights producing over 3 million lumens (by our calculations)

... it is preposterous and/or arbitrary and capricious to think that placing a propane torch in the hand of the golden-winged-warrior-goddess statue will enhance the visibility of this colossus to "airmen."



The propane torch is not what will make the arch visible to "airmen."

D. The Proposed Light Color of 4000° K CCT is Unpleasant to the Eye, Will Increase Light Pollution, and Clearly Violates NCPC Regulations.

The Lighting Plan proposes that **all** of the lights that will be installed at the site will be of the "cool white" variety - expressed by cognoscenti as "4000° K CCT". (Color Corrected Temperature). This is objectionable on several grounds.

First, "cool white" lighting is seen by experts as crisper or harsher than "soft white" or "warm white" lighting. Public opinion surveys have shown that most people prefer "soft white" or "warm white" lighting.

Second, cool-white light creates more light pollution. When cooler, bluish light reaches the atmosphere it has a greater tendency to scatter and create a glare zone in the region. Its can also create a haze that reduces visibility.

For these and other reasons the NCPC has banned the use of "cool white" lighting in and around the Monumental Core. Its "Monumental Core Streetscape Project" finalized in 2025, https://www.ncpc.gov/plans/streetscape, prescribes acceptable and unacceptable lighting colors. The pertinent table – attached as Appendix 1 – is found on p. 25 of the NCPC guidance. It identifies acceptable colors for various applications. **Not one category of lighting is permitted to be any "cooler" than 3000° K CCT.** Many applications are required to use warmer light. Thus the NCPC cannot approve the current proposal without violating its own regulations.

E. Upward-pointing Floodlights That Are Situated under the Landing Path to Runway 19 Will Pose an Extreme Hazard to Air Navigation

Nothing in the materials distributed by NPS or the FAA address the crucial question of whether the hundreds of upward-pointing floodlights will impair the visibility of pilots attempting to land to the south on Runways 15 or 19 – despite the fact that these powerful floodlights are located directly along the landing path, depicted below:



Image - New York Times

Certainly no one has forgotten the tragic air disaster – involving the same runway (#19) – that took place earlier this year and cost 67 people their lives. It has been reported that one of the causes of the crash was the plethora of distracting light sources around the airport. https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2025/dca-crash-cause-lights/

The FAA issued a "Determination of No Hazard to Air Navigation" on Sept. 28 of this year. Though the draft "DNHAN" issued back in July had recognized the arch as a hazard and called for installation of warning lights, after "interagency review" all of that bothersome language was removed from; the final DNHAN states:

3. EFFECT ON AERONAUTICAL OPERATIONS

*Aeronautical study disclosed that the proposal would have **no effects** on existing or proposed arrival, departure, or en route instrument flight rule (IFR) operations, minimum flight altitudes, minimum vectoring altitudes (MVA), aeronautical procedures, or aeronautical facilities at DCA... (emphasis added).*

Undoubtedly this was well-received at the White House.

The last three pages of the DNHAN are devoted to public comments and the FAA's responses thereto.

One of those comments -- and the FAA's response -- is pertinent here:

Comment 4: *A comment stated that required Part 77 obstruction lighting combined with planned decorative monument lighting will increase pilot night-vision impairment, hinder the ability to identify other aircraft at night, and cause severe glare during arrivals and departures.*

FAA Response*: The obstruction lighting recommended for the proposed structure will be Night Vision Goggle (NVG) compatible. Additionally, glint and glare evaluations fall outside the regulatory scope of 14 CFR Part 77 for off-airport aeronautical studies...*

In other words, according to the FAA, evaluating "glint and glare" that penetrates into cockpits of aircraft approaching DCA "is not our job." Unstated was whether they expect commercial pilots to use night vision goggles when landing on Runway 19 at night.

Respectfully submitted,

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DC CHAPTER

Appendix 1 - NCPC Lighting Guidance

Guidance Summary Chart:

Component Type & Tier	Color Temperature Guidance	Brightness/Dimness Guidance	Other Guidance
Structures: Civic Buildings, Memorials, Monuments, and Bridges			
Tier 1	Soft white (3,000K)	Most visually prominent in the nighttime sky.	
Tier 2	Soft white (3,000K)	More visually prominent than Tier 3 and the surrounding urban context.	
Tier 3	Soft white (3,000K)	More visually prominent than surrounding urban context.	
Landscapes: Parks and Open Spaces			
Tier 1	Soft white (3,000K) for nationally significant open space and urban settings. Warm white (2,700K) for natural/waterfront and residential settings and pedestrian walkways.	Brighter lighting in urban settings. Dimmer lighting in nationally significant open space, natural/waterfront, and residential settings.	Protect the primary nighttime vistas including the dim lighting on the Mall within the U.S. Capitol Building's western viewshed.
Tier 2	Soft white (3,000K) for nationally significant open space and urban settings. Warm white (2,700K) for natural/waterfront and residential settings and pedestrian walkways.	Brighter lighting in urban settings. Dimmer lighting in nationally significant open space, natural/waterfront, and residential settings.	
Tier 3	Soft white (3,000K) for nationally significant open space and urban settings. Warm white (2,700K) for natural/waterfront and residential settings and pedestrian walkways.	Brighter lighting in urban settings. Dimmer lighting in nationally significant open space, natural/waterfront, and residential settings.	
Streetscapes: Avenues and Streets			
Radiating & Edging	Soft white (3,000K) for nationally significant open space and urban settings. Warm white (2,700K) for natural/waterfront and residential settings and pedestrian walkways.	Brightness and dimness dependent on views to important illuminated structures. Generally, brighter lighting in urban settings. Dimmer lighting in nationally significant open space, natural/waterfront, and residential settings. (Streetlight dimming achievable through coordination with DDOT)	See the Pennsylvania Avenue Lighting Plan (1977) for more details on this street's unique lighting design.
Connecting & Traversing	Soft white (3,000K) for nationally significant open space and urban settings. Warm white (2,700K) for natural/waterfront and residential settings and pedestrian walkways.	Brightness and dimness dependent on views to important illuminated structures. Generally, brighter lighting in urban settings. Dimmer lighting in nationally significant open space, natural/waterfront, and residential settings. (Streetlight dimming achievable through coordination with DDOT)	
Local	Determined by DDOT (2,700K to 3,000K)	Determined by DDOT	Determined by DDOT

Comments on the New Monumental Arch Project

My personal objections to the “New Monumental Arch project” initially sprung from both the aesthetic travesty and from the proposal’s insult to the citizens of this country. Something is very wrong when the President of the United States undertakes a project to build a monument honoring himself -- or “me” (his word). Something is very wrong when the President of the United States orders a rush job because if a monument is to be built in his honor, he has to do it (his words). Something is very wrong when the President of the United States views the nation’s capital city as his sandbox to play in because working on a construction project is “really like relaxation for me.” (his words).

During this and previous NCPC meetings on the proposed Arch, I have heard testimony from architects addressing the flawed conception of the project. I have heard historians speak to the significance of the physical relationship of Arlington House and the Lincoln Memorial. I have heard testimony about the devastating impact on the symbolic importance of the monuments and memorials and the aesthetic beauty of this planned city. I have heard testimony from professionals knowledgeable about practice, policy and law condemn this project as a blatant subversion of our rules-based history and legal codes.

All of this testimony strengthened my initial objections to this project, but I have learned much more. Like Donald Trump, I have not served in the military, do not come from a military family and do not have family buried in Arlington Cemetery. The testimony of those in the military and from military families has truly opened my eyes to how the Arch would be a desecration of what is considered sacred ground.

Commission Chair Paoletta is credited with saying that leaving Memorial Circle empty would be “a disgrace to our nation and her noble veterans.” I hope that the fact-based, heartfelt and heartbreaking comments from thousands of American citizens will convince the Commission to vote to leave the Circle as a quiet place, respectful of the dead and their service to this country. The testimony makes clear that the Circle is not

empty and that building a grotesque monument to one man’s ego would be the “disgrace to our nation and her noble veterans.”

The Commission has the power to honor the people of the United States and to stop the selfish and misguided desires of a petulant ruler. I ask you to do so today.

Diane DeFries
November 2026

My name is Beth Baker, and I live in Takoma Park, Maryland. My family moved to the Washington area in 1962 from Columbus, Ohio, when I was 10 years old. My father had been offered a good job in the federal government. Moving to the nation's capital was a big deal for our Buckeye family. I loved when we drove downtown, especially at night, to see and admire the monuments. Even as a kid, I recognized that the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington Cemetery were hallowed ground.

Now, at age 74, I feel this sense of reverence in a deeply personal way. My parents are interred at Arlington. My father was a Lieutenant Colonel and served in the Army Corps of Engineers, building airstrips in Europe during World War II. After the war, he joined the Reserves. When he died, we realized that he could be laid to rest in Arlington, and later my mother could be there too. I will never forget the honor ceremony for my father on a drizzly March day, with the riderless horse and the playing of taps.

My in-laws are also there, and my husband and I make regular visits to the cemetery to lay roses and to reflect on our parents' lives. We are grateful for the peacefulness and serenity we find there.

Arlington Cemetery captures the phrase "rest in peace." It is a place of reverence and gratitude to those who put their lives on the line for our country. But that sense of serenity would be shattered by the construction of President Trump's 250-foot project whose stated purpose has changed repeatedly. But the real reason was the first one he gave, on the record, in 2025: the arch is being built for him. To honor himself. Think about that. With the addition of snipers and weapons and a blazing light at night, the towering

gold-topped structure is intended not to honor the fallen but to project dominance, might and the triumph of one man's ego over the wishes of the citizenry.

I urge you to find it in yourselves to turn down this project. You will be standing alongside those who care most about this hallowed place: families, veterans and service members. Please hear our voices.

I am the Commissioner for ANC 2F02
Thank you for allowing me to testify.
The Triumphal Arch is proposed to be built on Memorial Circle which is in Ward 2. As I previously testified, constituents, in a poll unanimously expressed opposition to the Triumphal Arch and urged the Commission to redesign The Arch and reduce its mass or to build the Arch elsewhere.
Subsequently ANC 2F unanimously passed a resolution that was sent to the National Capital Planning Commission.
ANC 2F unanimously "opposes construction of the Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle as currently proposed…ANC 2F urges the National Park Service and the National Capital Planning Commission to reject the Memorial Circle site."
Thank you for your consideration.
Neil Rocklin
Commissioner 2F02

Testimony to the Members of the National Capitol Planning Commission

November 5th, 2026

My name is Donna Shaunesey and I'm the proud daughter of Colonel Charles Alexander Shaunesey, Jr. He came of age in the Depression in Maine and joined the Army as a private when that was the only way to help support his brothers and sister. College was out of the question financially, but he was able to attend Officers Candidate School and then West Point, graduating in 1940. His service in World War II and Korea was recognized with the Legion of Merit and a Bronze Star, among other honors. His last assignment included supervision of Arlington National Cemetery, where he and my mother are interred after living well into their nineties. I visited their grave last week and was surprised to see that it was undisturbed – I was expecting the earth to have heaved up in light of the news about the Vainglorious Arch whose shadow would sully the final resting place of so many of our nation's heroes. My father would have been appalled.

The Arch is meant to glorify just one man at the expense of the thousands of the best that America has to offer. Construction and massive lighting will mean that military funerals and visits will no longer be the peaceful and reverent events that families deserve.

Please do not approve this un-American proposal.

EMI YAMAUCHI PUBLIC COMMENT
NOVEMBER 5, 2026 MEETING

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before this important Commission.

My statement is brief and to the point.

As a taxpayer, I am opposed to the use of any public monies for the design and construction of a frivolous vanity project at the behest of one megalomaniac individual.

As a U.S. citizen, I am appalled that we would try to emulate any 18th or 19th century — or for that matter Roman era — imperialist tradition by erecting an arch like this, which would overshadow and obstruct the view of Arlington National Cemetery. This cemetery is a sobering reminder of all those who suffered and sacrificed on behalf of **defending** our nation. It does not celebrate war, invasions, bombings, or glorify nah, nah, nah, nah-nah victories.

As a former D.C. resident who plans to return in the near future, I reject any more plans, any more destruction, and any more abominable architectural monstrosities to be forced upon us, just because we are hostages and captives of the federal government. This city is the capital of our country. It is not the personal fiefdom of whoever is temporarily occupying The White House.

As members of this Commission, it is your duty to protect and enhance the Capital's inherent historical beauty and symbolism in a uniquely American way. Leaving aside all of the legitimate concerns and challenges about the required approvals, funding, land use, single-source bidding, and peer review, the American people spoke this past Tuesday at the ballot box. They said enough vanity projects, enough corruption, enough Reflecting Pool travesties.

I urge you to reject these plans and this specific project. If anything is to be constructed on this land, it should go through the proper channels, with adequate time for peer review and public comment, and not be shoved down people's throats.

Chairman and members of the Commission,

I am Colonel Anne Johnson, retired from the US Air Force last year after 30 years of service.

I want to talk to you about what this proposed arch represents, and what it says about whose service this country chooses to honor.

I spent three decades serving this country. I served alongside the first female fighter pilots and other women who broke barriers, carried enormous responsibilities, deployed, led troops, and made countless sacrifices that most Americans will never fully understand.

The Military Women's Memorial at the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery exists because women's service was too often overlooked, minimized, or erased from our nation's history. It is the one national memorial dedicated to recognizing that service, and its Congressional authorization was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1985. I am a charter member, having first supported the memorial as a young lieutenant in 1997.

And now you are being asked to approve a 250-foot monument at Memorial Circle, just up the street, that would visually dominate this landscape with a height more than twice that of the Lincoln Memorial.

Think about that symbolism.

A memorial built to recognize generations of women who served their country, often in combat and despite discrimination, would be overshadowed by a monument dedicated to a sitting president who has described the arch as a monument to himself.

This isn't simply a disagreement about architecture. It is a question of what we choose to elevate in our nation's capital.

I recognize that you are being asked to evaluate plans, design, and technical requirements. But those decisions have consequences beyond engineering drawings. They shape the national landscape and communicate our national values for generations.

There are also serious questions, starting with whether this project has the necessary congressional authorization. Congress has not specifically authorized this arch or appropriated funding for it, though OMB has already redirected $15m for it. The administration's reliance on a century-old authorization is being challenged in court. I urge you not to treat that unresolved question as a technicality. Further, the project would sit directly in the flight path of Reagan National Airport. and as the wife of a professional pilot, I share the alarm of many people in aviation at the potential for a severe mishap should this high solid obstacle be built as planned. I don’t want to see people die when a plane experiences an in-flight emergency or a helicopter gets lost in the weather and slams into the arch.

I also cannot separate this project from the message it sends to women who have served. The president was found liable by a civil jury for sexually abusing E. Jean Carroll, and the presiding judge subsequently explained why the conduct could accurately be described as rape in the common understanding of that word.

For women veterans, the prospect of placing a monument to this president in the immediate landscape of the memorial honoring our service is deeply offensive.

I am not asking you to agree with my view of the president. I am asking you to recognize your responsibility as stewards of a national landscape that belongs to all Americans.

We deserve better. The country deserves better. And the women currently in uniform and the next generation of women who step up to serve our country deserve to see that their service is valued, not diminished or literally overshadowed by a monument to a man who avoided military service.

Please give the history, dignity, and purpose of Arlington National Cemetery and the Military Women's Memorial the serious consideration they deserve.

Public Comment for National Capital Planning Commission

November 5, 2026

Ron Schlittler

Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Ron Schlittler. I am the son of a career Army officer, a veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He is buried in a military cemetery in Anchorage, Alaska that looks like a seamless extension of Arlington National Cemetery.

Today you are hearing overwhelming and compelling testimony in opposition to a creepy 25 story viewing platform for thousands of strangers to pry into daily, private, sacred, burials and remembrances at Arlington National Cemetery.

With my 3 minutes, I have some process questions for you to help me and others understand what is going on here today, and hope you or appropriate staff can address them.

1. What is your obligation to take public input into account, if any, and how?
2. Can you be held accountable for ignoring overwhelming public opposition?
3. How can this body in good conscience bum rush this unauthorized and illegal Trump vanity project that is so widely opposed for so many reasons by so many?

4. Given that the well-known hallmark of this administration is corrupt grift and self-dealing, what is in this for the Trump administration appointees on the Commission for greenlighting this outrageous project?

OCCUPY THE PARK
BLOCK THE ARCH

There is no time to lose. It is time for a popular mobilization and direct action in Washington to stop Trump's arch from being built.

We have to do this in person because our representative institutions have let us down. Congress won't act. The bureaucracy is compromised. The Supreme Court is mesmerized by Trump's legal chicanery. Trump appears to be building his illegal ballroom. He is wreaking havoc with the Kennedy Center. Before he unilaterally bulls ahead and breaks ground for his triumphal arch, we must take action.

It's time to occupy the federal memorial park site. Put our bodies on the line to prevent excavation from beginning for Trump's garish, illegal, wasteful arch. The bulldozers could be there within weeks. The time to start blocking this offensive, vainglorious, costly project is now.

Set up an encampment on the people's land. Keep replenishing the numbers of "visitors" so that there is a continuous stream of people, walking onto the park, sitting in the park, occupying the park — day and night, 24/7 — preventing excavation in the park.

All you need to start is a group of 20 for more committed activists (there are thousands in Washington alone), willing to put their bodies on the line in this peaceful fashion. It won't take long for others to join them. I'll come down from Syracuse with my wife, who has Alzheimer's, and we'll do our stint occupying the park. Third Act retirees like us will stream in from all over with our folding chairs. Will we face arrest for loitering? Not if we keep moving. Will we be arrested for disorderly conduct, or interfering with police, or blocking traffic, or, or, or? Fine. The charges won't stick. Besides, as Walt Whitman would say, you can't arrest multitudes.

How long will we have to occupy the park? No telling. Until Trump backs down? Until the federal bureaucracy acts as it should? Until the Supreme Court starts affirming the decisions of lower court judges? Until Congress asserts its prerogatives? Until the midterms, when we throw the bums out? Until the snow flies?

Doesn't matter. There are enough of us to keep this going as long as necessary. As long as we the people are in the way, the president can't build his ugly arch in our park.

But we must act now.

Fred Fiske Minoa NY

Honor the Fallen, Stop the Arch

Bartley Collart, Arlington, Virginia

[0:00 – 1:20] Opening: The True Definition of Honor
Good [morning/evening], members of the commission and fellow citizens.

Three years ago, my son, Marine Crew Chief Spencer Collart, died a hero at just 22 years old.

He was posthumously awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal—the highest possible award for non-combat heroism.

After surviving a crash and successfully escaping the aircraft, Spencer chose to go back *into* the burning wreckage to rescue his trapped pilot and copilot. Spencer died in that attempt.

Today, Spencer rests permanently right here in Arlington National Cemetery.

For me, and for thousands of Gold Star families like mine, this ground isn't an abstract landscape

or a development site.

It is a sacred sanctuary where our heroes sleep.

The proposed 250-foot triumphal arch at Memorial Circle desecrates that solemnity.

True honor is not loud, boastful, or self-serving. It is quiet. It is humble. It is defined by the absolute selflessness of men like my son.

A massive monstrosity of white marble and gold does not honor the fallen.

Frankly, it is completely out of touch with the very values our service members live and die for.

It dwarfs their sacrifice, mocks their humility, and turns a sacred space into a theatrical backdrop.

[1:20 – 2:20] The Core Argument: Breaking Historic Sightlines & Unity
"If built, this 250-foot structure will permanently block the historic, intentional sightline from the National Cemetery to the Lincoln Memorial.

Furthermore, the Memorial Bridge is not just asphalt and stone—it is a physical representation of the

North meeting the South, an architectural symbol of national unity.

Crowning that sacred threshold with a heavy-handed, multi-million-dollar monument tears at the very visual and historical fabric of our nation’s capital.

We do not need a rushed monument pushed through on November 5th without proper congressional approval or deep consideration for the families who come here to grieve."

[2:20 – 2:50] Practical Reality & Call to Action
"Arlington County and Vietnam War veterans have already filed lawsuits to stop this project because it threatens to gridlock emergency vehicle routes and disrupt the peaceful flow of military funerals.

Rushing a final vote while these lawsuits are active makes a mockery of public trust.

My son gave everything for his fellow Marines. The very least this commission can do is protect the dignity of the ground he rests upon.

Reject this abomination.

Honor the fallen.

Stop the arch.

Thank you.

Nearly 70 other people here have made meritorious arguments against this planned obscenity of an arch, a monument to be erected by and for a demented despot who will end as the most reviled person to ever occupy the presidency. I have little to add to those.

Instead, I'd like to address this hastily and corruptly constituted commission. Before Tuesday's elections we might have come to you as petitioners. Think of us now as the prosecution. You have irrevocably associated yourselves with this symbolic attack on the American Republic. It's too much to ask for shame from anyone complicit in this scheme, but think twice about the ignominy and ruin to your careers and reputations that will assuredly ensue when you rubber stamp this. If this thing is ever built, the American people will see it demolished, but your names will remain forever in the documentary record of the shabby proceedings that permitted it. If you vote yes your names will be mud.

Brendan Martin
Arlington

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Commission. I am Katie Ries, a 40-year resident of Washington, DC and retiree who proudly served the federal government for 35 years. Today I am speaking on behalf of Third Act DC. We are the local chapter of a national organization of American elders who are passionate about protecting our democracy and our climate.

At Third Act (TA), we treasure the core principles of our democracy which include the rule of law and a government that responds to the will of its people--not to the will of a particular President who wants to build a monument to himself, in defiance of all public input, at taxpayer expense and in violation of all applicable laws.

We join with our TA sister and regional chapters speaking today and the nationwide multitude of organizations and individuals who vehemently oppose the construction of this Arch. This Commission has received extensive comments and testimony from so many Americans: veteran groups, Tribal Nations, historic preservation advocates, civil rights organizations, architects, archaeologists, museums, environmental organizations, and communities who do not want this Arch. Yet their professional and personal concerns apparently are falling on deaf ears, as the project speeds through and circumvents normal planning processes and consultations required by law.

This Arch would be a particular affront to our veterans who are already honored by the existing reverential spaces of the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington Cemetery and the Memorial Bridge that joins them. As noted in a recent Washington Post article (October 27), if constructed, 50,000 graves at Arlington Cemetery (including President Kennedy's) would literally be put in the shadow of the Arch.

Although one of the principal purposes of the Arch is supposed to honor our veterans, their substantial objections and valid concerns are ignored. Furthermore, its construction is demanded by a President who has called our service members "suckers" and "losers." A man who has never served a day in his life. What kind of message does this send to our veterans?

If the intent is to indeed celebrate freedom and liberty, these hallowed spaces should be respected and left alone--not subjected to darkness and the noise generated by this ill-conceived, noisy and crowded tourist attraction. The massive resources used for it could be much better applied to improving the well-being of the veterans who served this country so well and their families.

This issue is also personal for me and I know my experience is shared by many others. I was born on an Air Force base in Texas and I think of both of my late father's service in the Air Force—and especially of the service of my late father-in-law in the Army during World

War II—as I testify today. My father-in-law, who also served during the Korean War, was part of the march across France and Belgium into Germany, was at the Battle of the Bulge, and earned two Bronze Stars. He personally witnessed the destruction wreaked by fascism.

He spoke to us about the cost of maintaining freedom and liberty at home and abroad, as we visited the WWII and Korean War memorials and then crossed the Memorial Bridge to Arlington Cemetery during his last visit to DC.

I speak in part for him and my own father, because they would be outraged over this Trump vanity arch, how it would desecrate this hallowed area and how veteran's views are disregarded. Veterans rightly oppose the Arch. The people of Washington, DC don't want it. Americans across the country don't want it. It poses dangers to both air and auto traffic, has negative environmental impact and preservationists and others with aesthetic values stand appalled.

The bigger picture concern is what kind of America do you represent? Whose interests are you advancing? Do you represent the American people as our Constitution prescribes? Or do you only represent the narcissistic priorities of a President whose policies and actions were just so thoroughly repudiated in the midterm elections?

Please do not rubber stamp approval for this deeply unpopular, unlawful and ill-conceived Arch. I urge you to demonstrate your integrity as federal government representatives who act in the interest of the American people instead of blindly executing Trump's latest ostentatious desire.

History will record your actions and not treat you kindly if you choose to dishonor our country, its veterans and the will of its people by approving this disastrous Arch. Have the courage to not let this be your legacy. Thank you.

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NCPC Testimony: New Monumental Arch (File No.: 8778)

Good afternoon. My name is Marguerite Schellentrager. I live in Lincoln, California. Both of my parents are interred at Arlington National Cemetery so this issue is very personal to me and to my family. My father was a WWII Army veteran serving as a young commander in the North African and Italian campaigns of the war. My mother fought in the French Resistance in the south of France. My parents were 25 years old when WWII ended.

Three undisputable facts you must consider:

1. Congress must authorize this monument. The Administration has not sought this authorization.
2. Donald Trump has publicly stated that he has the complete authority to undertake any projects he chooses concerning Washington DC monuments and sites.
3. The Administration has an established pattern of constructing projects without proper approval and without legal compliance, even in defiance of court ordered desist mandates.

For the above reasons alone, this project must be denied at this juncture.

In addition, the proposed Arch will irrevocably and totally destroy the sanctity and solemnity of Arlington National Cemetery. That Sacred Place and the entirety of the monuments to which it is connected, belong to the citizens of the United States and not to the Ego of one man.

Thank you.

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Thank you.

Thank you for holding this meeting and receiving this testimony. I am unable to be there in person but I feel compelled to speak again on this topic.

I will be honest since it has not been spoken of. The statue being placed on this proposed monument is a greek goddess. The same goddess that was used as the basis for the Statue of Liberty, Eleutheria, her greek equivalent is Artemis. From the seven rays of the crown to the inscription that's to be placed on the arch, you're exalting a greek goddess, one that the United States has not consented to be placed under.

A funny thing about the word "liberty". Most people recognize it as being synonymous with freedom. It is not the same. As a word, "liberty" has other meanings, such as "a breach of etiquette or propriety", or a "departure from rules or standard practice." Then there's the most insidious one, liberty is what sailors get, a "short authorized absence from naval duty usually for less than 48 hours." So liberty, in military terms, is just permission to play for a bit, but it is not freedom. So is the current Commander in Chief just giving the people a two day break from toiling? I wonder.

If you place the statute of a greek goddess on top of the words "one nation under god", our country will be violating one of the ten commandments for its 250th birthday at the behest of a man who has been making some interesting decisions, including putting his name and face on our currency. In the short pamphlet called "A Dialogue In Hell Between Montesquieu and Machiavelli" written in 1864 by Maurice Joly, Machiavelli is written as saying "From the day on which my image is on the money, I would be king." I honestly don't mind graven images, but I do mind when they are being declared a national god. I spoke to you previously about what the Old and New Testaments have to say about graven images. They are not good. I spent over a year in Washington D.C. sleeping on the streets. I saw the image of the Holy Spirit in everyone who provided food and housing for those on the streets, as well as the people on the streets themselves. I saw it in your faces when I spoke to you before.

One more thing, Artemis is the sister of Apollo, or as the New Testament called him, Apollyon, Abbadon, or Exterminans, the one who rules over the bottomless bit. In the Greek Pantheon, Artemis still serves "king" Apollo.

1 Samuel 8:18

et clamabitis in die illa a facie regis vestri quem elegistis vobis et non exaudiet vos Dominus in die illa

And you shall cry out in that day from the face of the king, whom you have chosen to yourselves: and the Lord will not hear you in that day, because you desired unto yourselves a king.

So that's pretty much all I have to say. Thank you for receiving my testimony.

I am Dañilo Augusto Feliciano and I am just a man, I think a man is superior to a king.

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Written Testimony — New Monumental Arch

Craig Crawford | Trail Mix (trailmix.cc)
National Capital Planning Commission | Project No. 8778 | November 5, 2026

Chairman **pow-LET-uh** (Paoletta), members of the commission:

I'm Craig Crawford, a retired journalist speaking for Trail Mix, an online community whose members have a few things to say about this proposed triumphal arch.

And believe me, I've edited out the profanity.

But beneath the colorful language, there's a serious argument. One I hope you'll consider before putting a 250-foot monument where it doesn't belong.

Washington is no ordinary city. Somebody actually planned this place. Its monuments, avenues, bridges and sight lines tell a story. And nowhere does that story speak more powerfully than the connection between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery.

On one side, Lincoln's promise of government of the people, by the people, for the people. On the other, the graves of Americans who died defending that promise.

The Memorial Bridge connects those two ideas. It doesn't need a giant exclamation point in the middle.

One of our readers, Jack, put it beautifully:

> **"You might convince me that the Arch is appropriate for this city but you will never convince me it is appropriate for that space."**

Another Trail Mixer, Jamie, worries about the historic sight line between President Kennedy's eternal flame and the Lincoln Memorial. She wrote:

> **"That arch should be wiped out if for no other reason than destroying the sight line from the Kennedy eternal flame to the Lincoln Memorial."**

That's a concern this commission ought to examine carefully.

And what about the practical consequences? Construction traffic, permanent security restrictions and diminished public access. Who benefits from those trade-offs? Certainly not the people who use this space.

These aren't unreasonable questions from people who just don't like Donald Trump. They're the questions you're supposed to answer.

Another Trail Mixer, Claire, reminded us why Americans rejected monarchy in the first place. We weren't interested in kings, emperors or monuments to their vanity.

She wrote:

“America’s triumph is its people.”

Six words. More American history in those six words than in 250 feet of stone.

And that brings me to you, the commissioners.

Some of you owe your appointments to President Trump. That’s how government works. But your responsibility doesn’t end with the man who appointed you.

It begins with the public you’re supposed to serve.

Presidents are temporary. Even the ones who seem determined to leave permanent reminders of themselves everywhere they go.

The Lincoln Memorial will outlast this administration. Arlington Cemetery will outlast it. The landscape connecting them should outlast it, too.

You don’t have to oppose Donald Trump to oppose putting this arch in the wrong place.

You just have to do your job.

Please reject this proposal.

Written Testimony — New Monumental Arch

Craig Crawford | Trail Mix (trailmix.cc)
National Capital Planning Commission | Project No. 8778 | November 5, 2026

Chairman **pow-LET-uh** (Paoletta), members of the commission:

I'm Craig Crawford, a retired journalist speaking for Trail Mix, an online community whose members have a few things to say about this proposed triumphal arch.

And believe me, I've edited out the profanity.

But beneath the colorful language, there's a serious argument. One I hope you'll consider before putting a 250-foot monument where it doesn't belong.

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NEW MONUMENTAL ARCH
TESTIMONY OF CHRISTOPHER J. CONNELL

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 5, 2026 MEETING

PROPOSED ACTION ITEM: New Monumental Arch

NCPC File Number: 8778
Agency: United States Department of the Interior
Installation: George Washington Memorial Parkway

TESTIMONY TEXT

My name is Christopher Connell. I am speaking today as an individual and as a citizen of the District of Columbia.

A lot has been said recently about the height of the Monumental Arch project, but I would like to speak about what lies below the surface. The National Park Service's revised Environmental Assessment report of October 2026, states that the 4-to-5-month foundation-building phase of the project would involve below ground excavation of approximately 75 vertical feet to reach bedrock. This depth would be necessary to establish a foundational infrastructure anchored on bedrock to support the arch (Exhibits A & B, attached). To put this into perspective, seventy-five feet to reach bedrock is nearly three times as deep as the Führerbunker in Berlin during World War II and the same depth as the caissons submerged below the East River to support the Manhattan anchorage of the Brooklyn Bridge in the late 19th century. The NPS report also states that approximately 1,400 truckloads of subsoil would be hauled off to Maryland or Virginia during the excavation phase. We can come to understand the enormity of the proposed project if we multiply 1,400 truckloads by an average hauling capacity of 420 cubic feet of soil per truckload. This gives us a product of 588,000 (or nearly a half million) cubic feet of excavated subsoil and alluvial deposits. I respectfully request that the Commission take additional time to study the details of the excavation phase of the project. If careful attention isn't paid to such issues as shifting subsoil layers and ground water flow and, if no-bid contracting and "botched" work are the outcome as we have seen elsewhere, the arch will prove structurally unsound. Like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the proposed arch would rest on unstable substrata, and its legacy would, ironically, see it "leaning to the left" (or to the right)—depending on one's perspective.

Before there was a Memorial Circle, before there was a Columbia Island, and before there was an Arlington National Cemetery, this area was part of a larger plantation and estate owned by the Custis-Lee families. In the 1950s, Murray H. Nelligan, the National Park Service historian for the Custis-Lee Mansion, authored a handbook, *Custis-Lee Mansion: The Robert E. Lee Memorial* which included a map depicting Arlington Estate as it had existed in 1860 (Exhibit C). This map

identified the location of slave cabins and a slave cemetery situated not far from today's axis that runs through Memorial Circle between Arlington House and the Lincoln Memorial. When we consider the history of this site, and when we read the words "Liberty and Justice for All" that are proposed for the Virginia-facing side of the arch, it doesn't take much to be deeply offended by this insensitive and ill-conceived motif.

From both a geotechnical and historical standpoint, I respectfully request that the Commission re-evaluate the scope and intention of the proposed monumental arch and not approve the site and building plans.

EXHIBIT A: CONSTRUCTION SHOWING WEST TERMINUS OF MEMORIAL BRIDGE AND COLUMBIA ISLAND IN FOREGROUND (note: the height differential between the bridge decking and the spoil basin on Columbia Island)

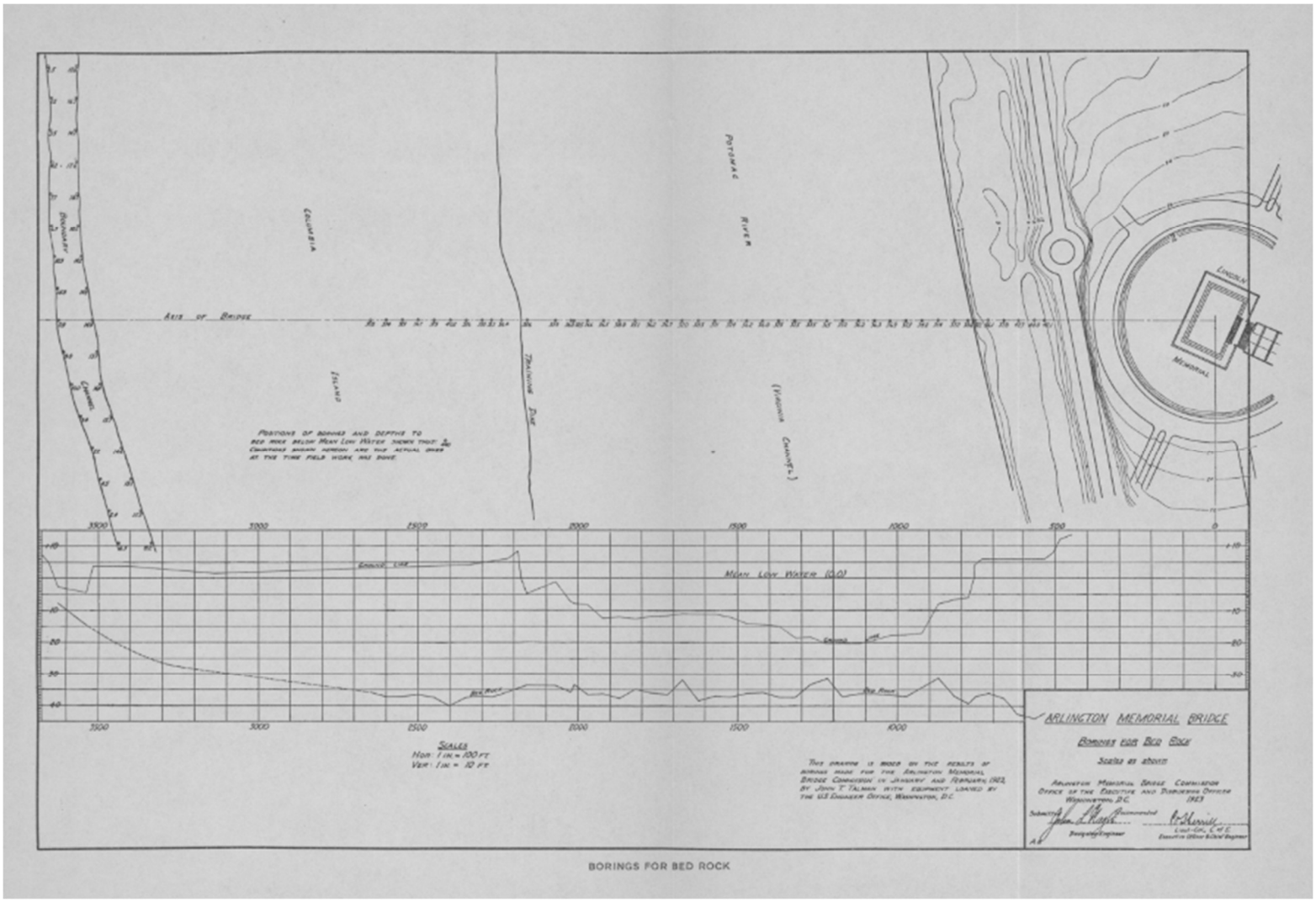


Citation:

War Department. Army Air Forces. Arlington Memorial Bridge across Potomac River – at Washington, D.C., [1930], photograph, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, NAID 68152166 / Local ID: 18-AA-140-10. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/68152166

This aerial photograph taken from the Virginia side of the Potomac as Arlington Memorial Bridge was nearing completion clearly illustrates the height differential between the depression of the spoil basin on Columbia Island and the bridge decking and bridge abutment immediately beyond it. ***This discrepancy was solved when several tons of sand and gravel "sucked from [the] river" (as reported by The Washington Post in October 1930) were added to the existing spoil basin, raising the level of Columbia Island an additional thirty feet to meet the Virginia terminus of the soon-to-be completed bridge.***

EXHIBIT B: BORINGS FOR BED ROCK (1924 AMBC REPORT TO THE U.S. SENATE)



Citation:

United States Congress. Senate, et al. Arlington Memorial Bridge. Message from the President of the United States, transmitting ... the report of the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission ... April 21 calendar day, . -- Read, referred to the Committee on Commerce, and ordered to be printed. April 24 calendar day, April 25, 1924. -- The Committee on Commerce discharged, and referred to the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds and ordered to be printed, with illustrations. [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1924]. https://www.loc.gov/item/2024878157

A substantial and detailed communication submitted to the United States Senate in 1924 by the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission under the chairmanship of President Calvin Coolidge, this report explained (in part) how Columbia Island would integrate with the overall bridge project and what the high/low cost estimates would be to achieve this. Concluding the report are various engineering drawings of bridge elevations, bridge arch and deck construction, including a "borings to bed rock" technical drawing that follows the bridge axis from the Washington side to the center of Columbia Island. ***It is important to note that these boring data indicate, at their most extreme, a depth of 40.2 feet (below mean low water) before bedrock is reached near the center of Columbia Island [p. 57].***

EXHIBIT C: ARLINGTON ESTATE, 1860

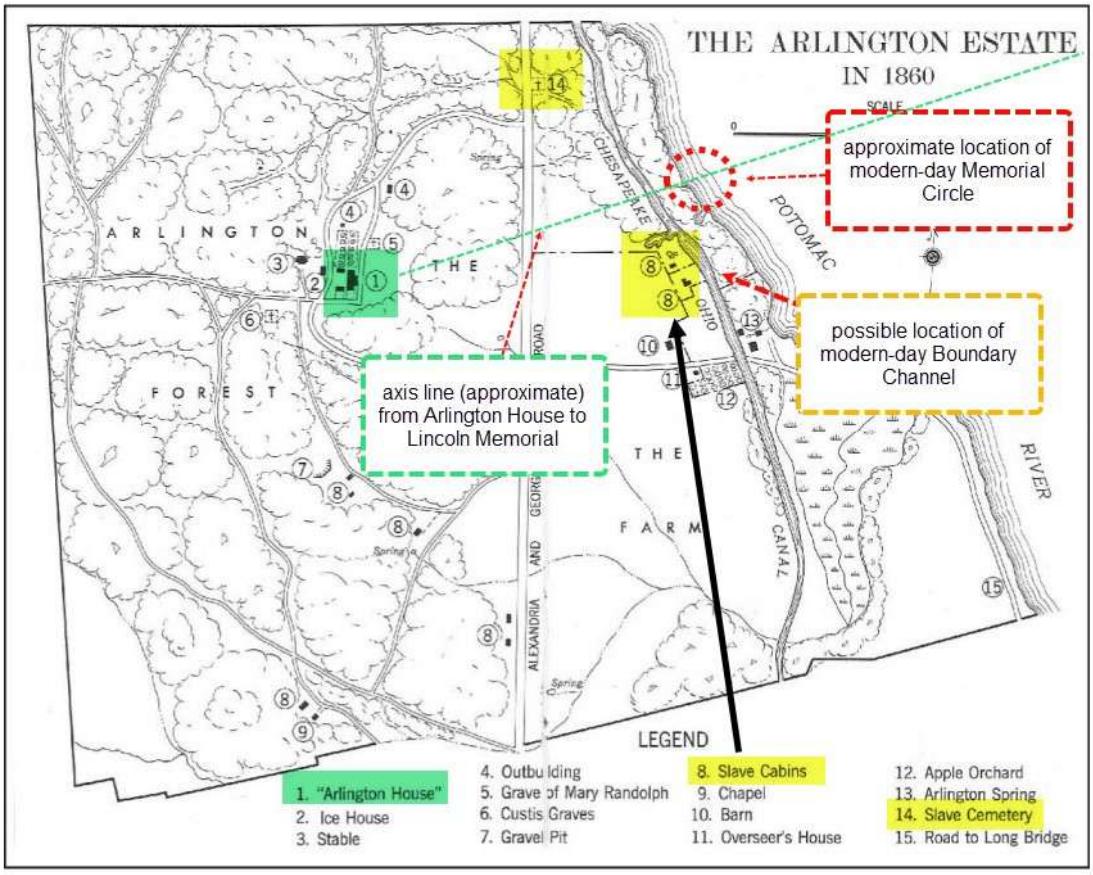


Figure 12 Composite Map of Antebellum Arlington Estate (Nelligan 1962)

Citation:

Nelligan, Murray H. Custis-Lee Mansion: The Robert E. Lee Memorial (Historical Handbook Series no. 6) U.S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1950, 1962 (revised). https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50570/old/50570-h/50570-h.htm

An informative historical survey of Arlington House and of the Custis and Lee families, this handbook also includes a map depicting Arlington Estate as it existed in 1860. ***This map identifies the location of slave cabins and a slave cemetery that had existed near the Potomac River and situated on both sides of the modern-day axis running through Memorial Circle between Arlington House and the Lincoln Memorial (p. 22).***

NEW MONUMENTAL ARCH
TESTIMONY OF CHRISTOPHER J. CONNELL

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NOVEMBER 5, 2026 MEETING

PROPOSED ACTION ITEM: New Monumental Arch

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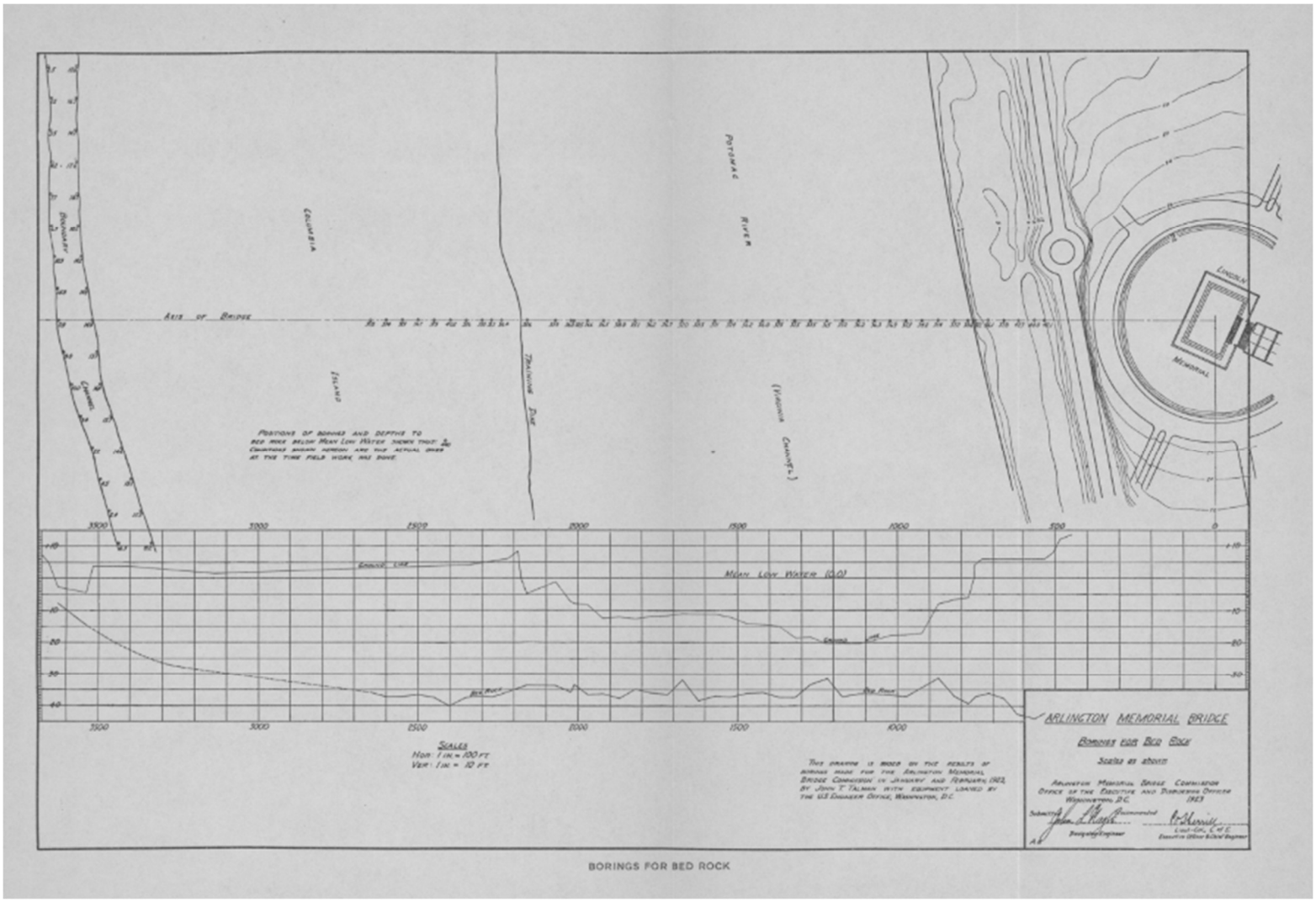


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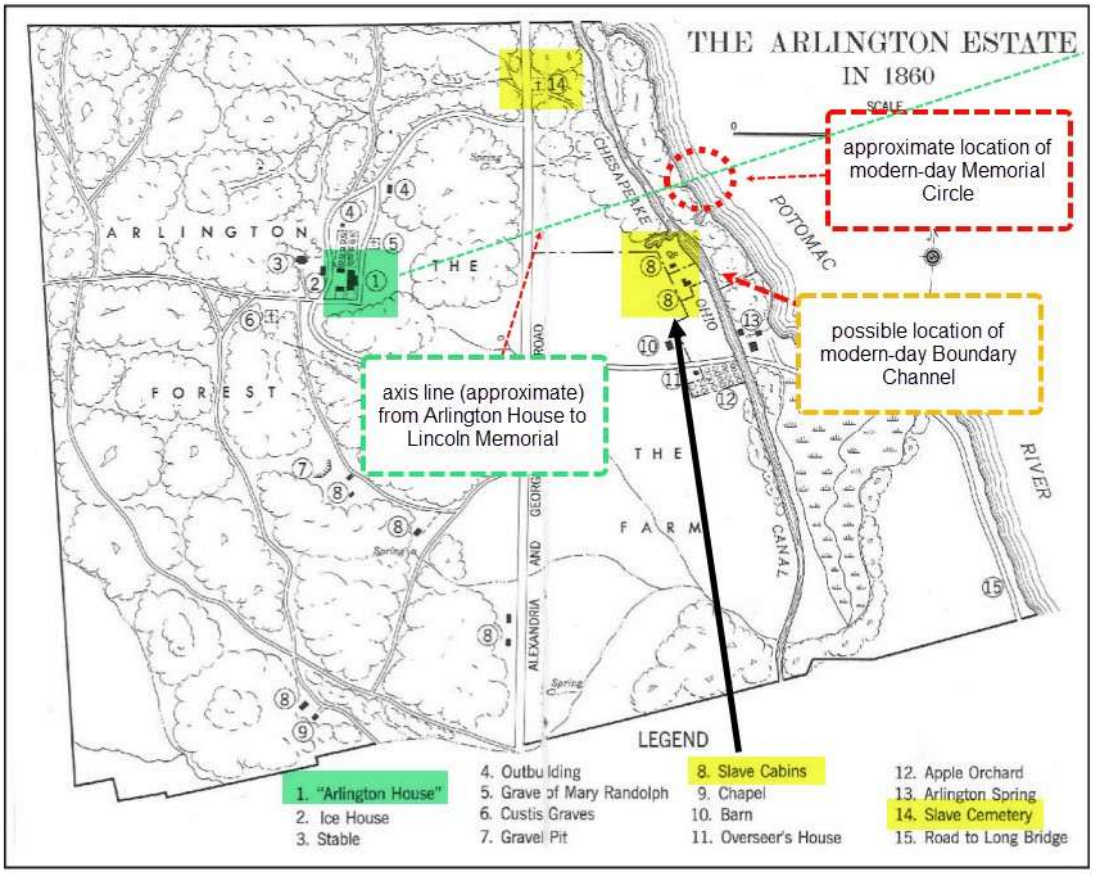


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Statement by Barbara Burchett before the National Capital Planning Commission regarding Action Item New Monumental Arch

November 5, 2026

Good afternoon, Commissioners.

I ask that The New York Times article, “How Trump’s Proposed Arch Would Change Washington,” be included in the record. It describes the administration’s argument that Congress’s approval of two columns a century ago authorizes this proposed arch. Two stately columns and a massive triumphal arch are profoundly different proposals.

My objection would be the same under any president. It concerns what we build, whose voices we hear, and what we owe this sacred place.

For me, that obligation begins with my dad, Chuck.

Charles Ray Burchett was born in Emma, Kentucky, in 1932. He came from coal country, from a family that worked hard, loved America, and believed in serving it.

He served nearly thirty years in the United States Air Force, including two tours in Vietnam. During an attack on Saigon, he helped saved fellow servicemen. He received two Purple Hearts. Shrapnel remained in his body for the rest of his life.

He was a husband of fifty-five years, a father, a volunteer teacher, a Little League coach, and a guiding presence for three grandsons.

My father never asked for much. But he was insistent about one thing: he wanted to be buried at Arlington.

He got his wish.

Today, he rests in Section 54, on a hill overlooking our nation’s capital. When I visit, I speak softly. Around me are other families, other names, other lives of service.

Nearly 430,000 people rest at Arlington. Each leaves a circle of people for whom this ground is deeply personal.

A 250-foot arch at Memorial Circle would intrude upon that place of remembrance and the historic connection between Arlington and the Lincoln Memorial—a landscape expressing sacrifice, reconciliation, and Union.

When harm to that landscape is described as “aesthetic injury,” please remember what those words encompass: a daughter visiting her father; a family following a caisson; the quiet dignity that makes Arlington unlike anywhere else.

That harm would be real.

Commemorating America’s 250th anniversary is a worthy purpose. It calls for a monument shaped by public deliberation, congressional participation, and respect for the setting.

Commissioners, you have a responsibility to protect this place for those who mourn today and those who will come after us.

Please reject this proposal. Honor the people’s voice. Follow the democratic process and the law.

Let Arlington’s enduring message remain undiminished.

Thank you.

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Dirk Wiley Testimony

Thank you for the time to speak today. I'll be brief, because I believe many other people will talk about negative effects of the proposed Triumphal Arch; it's out of scale proportions for the district, it's effect on traffic, the embarrassing justification of national security, and its mere visual presence between the national mall and Arlington Cemetery.

Today, I want to speak about the commission's role in preserving the historic landscape of the district, and my concern that, like the east wing of the White House, work is moving forward without regard for any of the protections that we've developed over the last several decades. The commission's role, along with congress, in protecting the national park sites and historic district, should not be ignored, and the authority of the commission should not be given away.

As a retired National Park Service employee, I know the role that these legal and procedural hurdles play in preventing thoughtless development, and I'm asking the commission to play its appropriate role in deciding the future of this project.

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David Summers Testimony

Thank you for this opportunity to speak from the heart.

When I was in the 9th grade, every student in Mr. Rannow's American History class had to stand up and recite the Gettysburg Address. By the 30th recitation, it was pretty much a rote affair, but the exercise had its effect: I never forgot it. At some level, I thought about it for thirty years, every time I crossed Memorial Bridge going to and from work, and how the sacrifice of those buried in Arlington Cemetery meant that "government of the people, by the people, for the people has not perished from the earth."

At Gettysburg Lincoln said "We cannot consecrate – we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract."

That is as true of Arlington Cemetery as it was of Gettysburg, and it is why, at the conclusion of an earlier session of the National Capitol Planning Commission, I was jolted when someone paraphrased Lincoln by saying it is "fitting and proper" to proceed with plans to construct an arch.

It is not fitting – it is way too big, for starters, and it is not proper – this space has already been consecrated by those who gave their lives for our country.

My father always said that if I was going to make up an excuse for something, I should make up just one. He wouldn't have bought the raft of reasoning for this monument: Is it to honor the semiquincentennial? Will it be a great tourist attraction? Does it have a military purpose? Because other cities have an arch do we need one? Did Congress approve this 101 years ago?

Let's remember Lincoln, and preserve the link between North and South that is the very air connecting the pillars of the Lincoln Memorial with those of Arlington House.

Beatrice Camp Testimony

The proposed arch is unwanted, unnecessary, and unappealing. It would be a monstrous obstacle, both physically and visually, between Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln Memorial. I regularly bike past Memorial Circle on my way into DC from my home in Arlington and can easily foresee the kind of traffic problems such an arch would cause.

I am very much opposed to this project for a variety of reasons. A recent analysis by the Washington Post noted the shadows the arch would cast on graves at the Cemetery and the bright lighting that would disrupt the sacred calm there at night. Plus the on-off-on-again plan to make the arch a military defense installation is insane and totally out of keeping with this area.

But as an Arlington resident, I want to concentrate my comments on the traffic and pedestrian safety concerns raised by Arlington County staff in a project review that flagged numerous practical concerns.

The review questioned likely impacts on roads, pedestrians, historic views and air traffic that would be caused by a 250-foot arch in the middle of the Memorial Circle roundabout. Concerns include pedestrian passage near the busy traffic circle, where visitors would have to cross multiple travel lanes in order to reach the monument.

In addition, the arch would cause major transportation disruption by delaying thousands of commuters who pass through the roundabout every day including potential impacts to the connected network, such as George Washington Memorial Parkway and Richmond Highway (Virginia State Route 110) for vehicles and the Mount Vernon Trail and Washington Boulevard Trail for pedestrians and bicyclists. And, as many have warned, building a structure over 200 feet high could disrupt flight patterns over the roundabout, potentially affecting operations at Reagan National Airport and land use planning in Arlington.

As many comments have noted, a structure of this size would disrupt the “feeling, setting and design” of historic resources in the area of Arlington National Cemetery. The scale and mass of the arch is inappropriate in the context of its historic setting and would have massive negative impacts on impact traffic in the area. It should never be built. ##

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Testimony of Joe Rothstein

Washington, DC

My name is Joe Rothstein. I'm 91 years old, a Korean war veteran and a longtime resident of the District of Columbia.

I state my age here to underscore that I've been to many burials and memorials at Arlington National Cemetery. This is truly hallowed ground for our nation and its democracy. It must not be defiled. A proposal such as the Arch under consideration would be unthinkable at Gettysburg or any other battlefield, domestic or foreign, where we honor the men
and women who gave their lives for us.

I share the objections of most other speakers at this hearing, the disruption of sightlines, its scale and proportions, and the potential traffic and aviation hazards. Nevertheless, I would not be here objecting if the process for building this memorial had followed long held legal and standard procedures.

It is beyond belief that the commission is considering for approval a monument to the glory of the United States in a manner that is contrary to the values we honor as a democracy. A memorial to our heritage built with the scorn of so many Americans would not be a symbol we revere. It would be America's Edsel, built illegally by a rigged vote.

No monument design should be allowed to proceed this way. And I urge this commission to listen to the near unanimous outcry and delay action on its approval.

Ginge Sivigny Testimony

My name is Ginge Sivigny. My husband and both his parents are buried in Arlington Cemetery. I have been at Memorial Circle many times recently with signs urging the protection of that sacred space. On those days my heart has been filled with awe and gratitude as I look across Memorial Bridge to the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, and take in the lovely view of the Potomac River, The Kennedy Center, the steps where, as a teenager I used sit and enjoy evening Watergate concerts by the Army Band on a river barge playing George Gershwin hits. Each time I visit my husband's grave the solemn experience begins as I approach Memorial Circle and drive around it towards the checkpoints to enter the cemetery.

I cannot imagine driving there and being faced with bulldozers and cranes constructing this monstrous arch. The noise, the traffic, the chaos. I'm 80 now, and after 3 ½ years of construction I may not be able to resume my visits.

Aside from its grotesque size and design, this arch, if built, will be a jarring contradiction to the comforting, unifying, and healing atmosphere that has prevailed there for so many years, fostered by the millions of visitors who respectfully honor those who served and sacrificed for our country. The proposed arch will scream of vanity, division, discord and disdain for normal processes such as Congressional oversight and approval.

I urge you to abandon this short-sighted and poorly planned attack by self-aggrandizing people to invade a sacred space that belongs to and is beloved by the American people.

Good afternoon, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am SGT Michael Marceau, U S Army, retired. I live in Maryland.

I am joining today with thousands of other veterans and military family members to speak out against the stupid arch that the president wants to build just outside the hallowed grounds of Arlington National Cemetery.

We know that tens of millions of Americans oppose the arch as being too expensive. They would rather see our government working to address economic issues affecting people in every state that to construct a memorial to a would-be dictator.

Americans are struggling to feed their families, to put gas in their cars, and to find affordable healthcare. Let's not forget his ill-thought out and constantly changing tariffs, which raise prices on many items that we use every day. During the past month 53,000,000 Americans have voted early to say that our country is going in the wrong direction and that we need to reverse course.

He says the arch will honor veterans. Like every other comment he makes, this is a lie. Remember how he "Honored" Sen John McCain in July 2015? On a trip to France in 2018 he called veterans "suckers and losers." The only thing the arch will honor is his vanity and ego. There is more honor in the body parts I left in Vietnam in 1970 than in his big, bloated, bruised body.

If he really wants to honor veterans [and thank us for our service], he can do so by ending his war of choice against Iran, which is costing Americans ONE BILLION DOLLARS every day. He should also cancel his proposal to eliminate 30,000 jobs at the Veterans Administration and he should fill the 40,000 slots that are currently vacant. This will ensure that veterans get the healthcare, especially mental healthcare, we have earned and deserve, and will prevent some of the 22 suicides that occur every day among veterans.

I am a 100% disabled Vietnam veteran and I am eligible to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. I do not want my time after death to be ruined by the view of a second rate memorial to a 5 time draft dodger which would block my eternal view of the Lincoln Memorial.

I think Americans understand that taking care of all of our veterans and service members is much more important than erecting a monument to the vanity of a 34 time time convicted felon.

Michael Marceau
Rockville, MD

Testimony to the National Capital Planning Commission regarding President Trump's proposed "Monumental Arch" by Stewart Schwartz, veteran

Agenda Item 5a, File #8778

November 5, 2026

Chair Paoletta and members of the NCPC:

I am writing to strongly oppose the construction of President Trump's proposed "Monumental Arch" on the traffic circle at the western end of the Memorial Bridge. It would block the historic memorial alignment and views between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery. The National Park Service determined that the 250-foot-tall arch and its statuary would have an adverse effect on 37 to 42 historic resources within the viewshed. A study by VoteVets and confirmed by the Washington Post demonstrated that the arch would cast morning shadows over the graves of our fallen.

I am a retired Navy Captain (O-6) who defended our nation against the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet Union and China. My father and uncle served during WWII in the fight against fascism, and my grandfather and great uncle served during the WWI era. My Jewish great-grandfather and his family fled oppression in Eastern Europe during the late 1800s. His brother and family who stated in Europe were murdered by the Nazis in the Holocaust.

I am deeply concerned by autocratic symbolism of the proposed arch and the undermining of the rule of law, the role of Congress, and the independence and responsibility for objective review by civic commissions like the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Fine Arts Commission, and National Capital Planning Commission.

The Lincoln Memorial, Memorial Bridge, and Arlington National Cemetery were designed to honor those who fought to restore the Union and to symbolize the reuniting of our nation and reconciliation of our people. The 250-foot-tall arch would block this historic memorial viewshed. It would tower above the Lincoln Memorial. Only the Washington Monument would be taller.

I concur with the comments of VoteVets, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, and numerous veterans and historic preservationists opposing this desecration of our historic memory.

I have walked among the gravestones of Arlington, stood by President Kennedy's grave, walked across the Memorial Bridge, and stood in awe of President Lincoln's eloquent words from his Second Inaugural Address and Gettysburg Address. The arch is a wholly inappropriate symbol at odds with the humility, respect, and honor that we have provided with the layout of the Lincoln Memorial, Memorial Bridge, and Arlington National Cemetery.

In fact, triumphal, monumental arches are most often associated with empires, conquest, and in the 20th Century, with fascism.[1] Roman arches celebrated emperors and conquest. I am part Jewish and I know that the Roman Arch of Titus commemorates the crushing of the Jews in Judea and that Hitler planned a massive arch. Emperor Napoleon built his Arc de Triumph to celebrate his conquests.

Given this history, the proposed arch's symbolism is wholly inappropriate not only for this location, but inappropriate and unacceptable for honoring our 250th anniversary as a democratic nation.

The arch will have an adverse effect under the provisions and standards of Section 106. It must either never be built or be built in another location at a smaller scale and with a design more appropriate for our democratic values. By any objective and legal measure, and in consideration of your own legacies as citizens and as members of the NCPC, you must recommend against construction of the proposed arch.

Thank you,



Stewart Schwartz
CAPT, USNR (ret)
Attorney, licensed in Virginia
Richmond, Virginia

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1 https://news.cornell.edu/media-relations/tip-sheets/cornell-experts-trumps-triumphal-arch-revives-symbol-empire-fascist-rule)

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission:

My name is **Jose Feliciano**, and I am a proud veteran of the **United States Marine Corps**. I am here today in strong support of the proposed **Monumental Arch on Columbia Island**.

To many Americans, monuments are landmarks. To veterans, they are something much more. They are places of remembrance, reflection, healing, and gratitude. They stand as lasting reminders of the sacrifices made by the men and women who have worn our nation's uniform and defended the freedoms we enjoy every day.

For veterans, military families, and the public, these memorials provide a meaningful connection to our nation's history. They honor those who served, those who continue to serve, and those who made the ultimate sacrifice. They help ensure that future generations understand the cost of freedom and the responsibility that comes with preserving it.

The proposed Monumental Arch would be a fitting addition to the historic landscape surrounding Arlington National Cemetery and the nation's capital. It would serve as a powerful symbol of service, unity, and national pride while complementing the many memorials that already recognize the contributions of America's veterans and service members.

As our nation commemorates 250 years of independence, this project presents an opportunity to create a lasting tribute that reflects the strength, courage, and commitment of generations of Americans who have answered the call to serve. The Arch would stand as an enduring symbol of national gratitude and a visible reminder that the sacrifices of our veterans will never be forgotten.

The authority for this project is clearly established under existing law, including the 1925 Act governing memorial structures on Columbia Island. This proposal is consistent with our nation's longstanding tradition of honoring military service and preserving places of remembrance that hold special significance for veterans and their families.

Additionally, in light of recent incidents involving vandalism and attacks on military monuments and memorials, I respectfully encourage that appropriate security measures be incorporated into the final design. Modern surveillance and other protective capabilities can help ensure that this monument, and the values it represents, are preserved for future generations.

This project is not about politics. It is about honor, remembrance, and respect. It is about recognizing those who stepped forward to serve something greater than themselves and ensuring that their legacy remains visible for generations to come.

I respectfully urge the Commission to approve construction of the Monumental Arch as permitted by law.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your continued support of America's veterans.

Respectfully submitted,

Jose Feliciano
United States Marine Corps Veteran

My name is Robert H. Smith III.

My grandfather, Captain Robert H. Smith, U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1920, lost his life in a plane crash returning from Pearl Harbor in 1943. The nation honored him by naming a destroyer in his memory, the U.S.S. Robert H. Smith, which saw action in the Pacific in the later stages of World War II. My grandfather is buried in Arlington.

My father, Captain Robert H. Smith, Jr., U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1947, served his country for 24 years. He, too, is buried in Arlington -- and my grandmother and my mother as well, both of whom raised their families in keeping with the tradition of devoted spouses across the many generations of American military families.

I speak to you today to protest the arch that is proposed to be erected at Memorial Circle between the Lincoln Memorial and the entrance to the Cemetery. In its pompous grandiosity, this arch would constitute a desecration of one of America's most sacred spaces and forever destroy the quiet serenity of the sight lines between the Lincoln Memorial and the Cemetery. This arch would be a monument of the most regrettable irony -- a tribute to the hubris of an individual who himself avoided military service on dubious grounds and has regularly demonstrated his disrespect for the sacrifices of America's servicemen and servicewomen.

I beseech you: do not besmirch your good names by forever associating yourselves with this insult to those who are buried here, including those who are dear to me.

Thank you, Robert H. Smith III

Stephen Eubank Testimony

Given the frivolous lawsuits this administration brings against anyone who opposes it, I feel I have to start by assuring you that none of the following comments are intended as a threat to your physical safety. They're just warnings about the threat your own behavior poses to your political power, your moral authority, the legacy you leave to your descendants, and your eternal souls.

The last time I offered public comments, I focused on the incredible disrespect the arch shows to our veterans – including my parents and grandparents – and the insanity of claiming that it's a fitting way to celebrate the 250th birthday of our democratic republic. I noticed, though that one of you was looking at his phone under the table through the whole public comment period and the chair only looked up to scold speakers when they said words like "fascist" or "dictatorial". You do realize, I hope, that many of those buried at Arlington gave their lives to prevent dictatorship from reaching our shores? This time, I'll just acknowledge the reality behind this charade. As someone has put it, "They were given their orders already. What we are doing now is preserving our objections for the record."

And really, it's hard to object to "the" arch because – even though it's hideously massive – it's a fast-moving target. It's going to be permitted because Congress authorized something to be built here a hundred years ago, only the plans changed a little bit this spring. Then, we found out it's not really for America, it's "for me". Now, just a few weeks ago, it turns out it's a much-needed military base (that has been in the planning stages for what? A few days?) complete with a sniper nest, ammo dump, and drone base. Now maybe those are gone, replaced by an anti-drone warfare mission. Is any of this nonsense even reflected in the plans you're about to approve?

As you finish your round at the Trump Memorial East Potomac Golf Course and look for your image in the Trump Memorial Reflecting Pool or dress up and head to the Trump Helipad or the Trump Memorial Patio where the Rose Garden used to be so you can take a quick spin around the Trump Ballroom before dinner-and-a-show at the Trump and What's-his-name Center for the Arts, wrapping up the evening by checking on the status of your FIFA award at the Trump Institute of Peace, just remember this piece of advice from an actual Nobel Prize winner:

"It's a hard rain's gonna fall".

My name is Pat Petro and I am a resident of Arlington, Virginia.

I'm speaking on behalf of veterans and their families which are buried at Arlington Cemetery. They can't speak today so I am providing a voice for them. Many gave their lives during long ago wars fought to protect our freedoms today. My father was a Marine during World War 2, fighting in the bloody Pacific theater. He was fortunate to have survived and became a long time Arlington resident. If he, and those buried here, were alive today they would be appalled at the plans for an atrocious arch structure at Arlington Cemetery.

Do NOT build this abomination here! If anyone wants a monstrous, cartoonish arch, they can build it at Disneyland, not on the hallowed ground of this sacred cemetery.

Testimony on the “Arch” for National Capitol Planning Commission session, November 5, 2026

I appreciate the opportunity to express my views to the Commission.

My name is Nancy Birdsall. I am a member of Third Act, a group bringing together “elders” (over 60) working to protect our democracy and our climate.

I have been a full-time resident of Washington DC since 1967, with just a few years away for study and for work. Over the years, I have hosted many friends from around this country and around the world, on visits to the Lincoln Memorial, the reflecting pool and the rest of the monument core along the river. I expect to live the rest of my life here in Washington DC and I count myself lucky to be able to do so. I therefore claim a heavier burden of “care” for what my city looks like and for the values its buildings and parks and infrastructure reflect than the average US citizen, and indeed than of our current president.

I do not like this Arch. It is too big, too grandiose, too out of proportion to the Lincoln Memorial it would face and the Arlington Cemetery burial grounds it would, visually and psychologically, ignore and seem to wish away. Among those and other complaints, the “gold” is too gaudy for a city that is the capital of a democratic republic – not the home site of a king.

This is, of course, a matter of individual taste. I cannot claim a greater value for my taste than can President Trump for his taste nor for the taste of any of you commissioners – and yet I do – on the grounds of my long residence in this city, the dozens of times I have visited, with children and grandchildren and out-of-town guests, the memorial center and the hundreds of times (it could be) I have walked, biked or driven over Memorial Bridge.

“Taste”, of course, is a weak reed on which to object to the President Trump’s proposed arch – except that in a democratic republic, the taste of a large majority of affected citizens should not be completely ignored in making a decision that will affect those citizens and their descendants for many generations. (I understand that at prior hearings on the Arch, almost all testimony came from citizens with objections to it.) And I realize that you have heard and know more than enough already about such non-taste issues as the effect this Arch would have on the sightline to the Arlington Cemetery burial grounds and the risk to current flight paths into and out of Reagan Airport.

I fear that all of you will give an “OK” to the Administration’s proposal, despite the many expressions of concern to the Commission in prior hearings and presumably in this hearing. How will I explain this to my children and grandchildren?

Finally, why is this commission hearing being held solely online? Is it to minimize press attention to the concerns that have been expressed about the proposed arch in prior hearings and that will be expressed no doubt in today’s hearing?

Nancy Birdsall

Hello, my name is Brian Parizot. My wife and I moved to Washington DC in January of this year. Not for work–we're both recent retirees. And certainly not because it's an inexpensive place to live on a fixed income. We moved here because we fell in love with the city over the course of 16 years of visiting it on and off, with and without our children. So while I live here now, I also bring the perspective of someone from the "rest of the country".

We hear a lot lately about "standing", as in a plaintiff must have standing to file a lawsuit, such as those against the arch.

I want to talk about another form of standing—social standing. If legal standing is required to initiate a lawsuit, I believe social standing is required to effect productive change in a community. As a new resident in DC, I may not have standing to object to the arch, at least not compared to the veterans whose valor is memorialized in the city's monuments, and whose experience of Arlington Cemetery is damaged by the proposed arch. And I may not have standing compared to the lifelong DC residents here who have seen the ups and downs of administrations trying to put their stamp on this city for decades, and who would benefit from a more humanitarian use of the millions of dollars apparently available to build the arch.

And this lack of standing is exactly the point.

Because while this president has been here longer than me, he too doesn't have standing to undo decades of norms and traditions, like leaving the view from the Lincoln Memorial to Arlington Cemetery clear.

When asked who the arch is for, the president said it's for him. The people of this city and this nation don't want the arch, for reasons that have been listed here today and elsewhere for months. They spoke loudly on election day that they reject this president's vision or lack thereof.

I call on this president and this commission to defer to those who have standing to say what's right for this place, this city and this country. Respect decades of tradition and the wishes of the people you are supposed to be serving. End this project now.

Zinaida Pelkey, D.O., FCA

Silver Spring, MD

National Capitol Planning Commission
Comments to the Commission on : Trump's "Triumphal" Arch

This project would be a grotesque monument to a vain, narcissistic convicted felon, a disgrace to our country and an insult to the 400,000 service members laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery.

Even the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), stacked with Trump's own appointees, couldn't find public support for it.

Trump's proposed revision to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act redefines what properties can be considered historic and removes the requirement to consult with Native American tribes.

As a concerned citizen with Native American ancestors (Abenaki), a physician, with a strong commitment to the American democratic participatory dream. **I strongly object!**

In the US, our leaders do not glorify themselves at the expense of citizens. Self aggrandizement is not part of the United States Presidential responsibilities!

Trump has been desecrating our beautiful and beloved capitol with a total disregard for the rules of law, ignorance, and total lack of respect for history, nature and aesthetics.

The New York Times cited 37 historic cites adversely affected by the proposed arch. The August 3rd. article quoted Roger W. Kirchen, Virginia's state historic preservation officer, in a June letter to the Park Service after it began the review. "These adverse effects are intentional and inherent in the design of the arch; it is intended to dominate the surrounding landscape,"

It also would pose a hazard to air travel at nearby Reagan National Airport.

Vietnam Veterans, represented by Public Citizen Litigation Group, are suing, stating "the proposed plan is a 'vanity project' that would disrupt one of Washington's most symbolically charged sightlines between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House, a view designed to evoke national unity after the Civil War.

Another lawsuit alleges the plan violates multiple federal laws, including the Commemorative Works Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

Trump just wiped out 3 million acres of Bear's Ears National Monument.
Is nothing sacred?

Step by step, Trump has been destroying the Kennedy Center for the Arts and, as a result, most self respecting artists refuse to perform there. In President Kennedy's inaugural address in 1961 he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." He asked the nations of the world to join to fight what he called the "common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself." (Trump has increased all 4.) Kennedy was truly dedicated in service to his country and one of our greatest presidents. He didn't demand that a center for the arts be built to honor him. It was built in 1971, 12 years after his tragic death.

Trump bulldozed the East Wing, hired an incompetent and unvetted contractor to make a 14 million dollar mess of the reflecting pool, he paved over the rose garden, he tore down historic trees, the list of his egomaniacal desecration is endless.

All this destruction must be stopped!

Desecration of our beautiful capitol:



Historic sites ‘adversely affected’ by the proposed arch (NY Times Reference:)

1. Memorial Avenue Corridor Cultural Landscape
2. Arlington Memorial Bridge and Associated Features
3. Lady Bird Johnson Park Cultural Landscape
4. Arlington National Cemetery Historic District
5. Arlington House Historic District
6. Arlington House (Robert E. Lee Memorial)
7. Arlington House Cultural Landscape
8. Lyndon B. Johnson Memorial Grove
9. Mount Vernon Memorial Highway Historic District
10. Lincoln Memorial Cultural Landscape
11. Lincoln Memorial
12. National Mall Site and National Mall Historic District
13. The Mall Cultural Landscape
14. Washington Monument
15. Washington Monument and Grounds Historic District
16. Washington Monument and Grounds Cultural Landscape
17. Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Historic District
18. East and West Potomac Park Historic District
19. L'Enfant Plan of the City of Washington, District of Columbia
20. Arlington Ridge Park
21. Pentagon
22. Fort Myer National Historic Landmark District
23. George Mason Memorial
24. Thomas Jefferson Memorial
25. Thomas Jefferson Memorial Cultural Landscape
26. United States Capitol
27. Georgetown Historic District
28. Old Naval Observatory
29. Observatory Hill Historic District
30. Alban Towers Apartment Building
31. American Institute of Pharmacy Building
32. George Washington Memorial Parkway
33. Halcyon House
34. Francis Scott Key Bridge
35. The National Cathedral
36. National War College
37. Vigilant Firehouse

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National Trust *for* Historic Preservation
Save the past. Enrich the future.

Public Testimony of Rob Nieweg,
Acting Chief of Preservation Advocacy & Initiatives,
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Before the National Capital Planning Commission
Regarding the Monumental Arch Proposal

Thursday, November 5, 2026

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the National Capital Planning Commission. I am Rob Nieweg—Acting Chief of Preservation Advocacy & Initiativesof the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about our opposition to the Monumental Arch.

As the National Trust and others have repeatedly pointed out, the location of the proposed Arch—directly in between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery—was conceived of by the McMillan Commission and other planning bodies as a symbol of national reconciliation after the Civil War, with every detail carefully designed to convey restraint, dignity, and balance.

The current proposal would irreversibly damage one of the most important civic landscapes in America, diminish the meaning of Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln Memorial, and block the historic line of sight between them.

The proposed Arch is colossal in size and incompatible with the setting of Arlington National Cemetery, where over 400,000 veterans and family members are buried. The site is defined by its quiet dignity, pastoral landscape, and solemn atmosphere of remembrance and honor. The Arch would permanently intrude on the historic viewshed and disrupt traditional norms governing the establishment of new presidential monuments.

We urge you to carefully consider the appeals of the nation's veterans and preservationists, who in large numbers have expressed concern throughout the review process.

Of course, it's not just veterans and preservation groups who share these objections. In an era when public opinion is split on almost every subject, it is remarkable to see the American people overwhelmingly united in their opposition to this Arch.

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Still, this project has not been reviewed with the scrutiny it requires. Historically, the commission has served as a deliberative and respected body that reviews major commemorative projects, often requiring repeated submissions, public hearings, design revisions, and additional environmental and preservation analysis before granting final approval.

Disappointingly, rather than working to refine this proposal, the commission has inappropriately advanced the Arch plans—from announcement to preliminary approvals—within months, despite its unprecedented height, location, and unresolved legal questions under multiple federal statutes. Widespread objections from consulting parties, preservation organizations, state historic preservation officials, veterans' groups, municipalities, and members of the public have also been brushed aside. Furthermore, the Arch's proposed military use is questionable and should be reviewed in full by this commission.

Thankfully in the past, the nation's great monuments and memorials were not rushed into existence.

They were carefully planned, skillfully executed, and built from enduring materials and construction methods intended to last for centuries as national symbols of American achievement and resilience.

Recently, the government has announced that they may start construction on the Arch immediately after the commission votes to approve it. This must not happen because there are numerous, unresolved issues.

Serious questions remain regarding the Arch's compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Commemorative Works Act, the Height of Buildings Act, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, and other legal requirements governing the design, placement, and approval of memorials and structures within the monumental core.

These laws reflect Congress's recognition that our nation's capital is a unique civic landscape that deserves exceptional care and scrutiny. Before any irreversible action is taken, these issues should be analyzed and resolved through a transparent public process consistent with both the letter and spirit of those laws.

In conclusion, the National Trust respectfully requests that you pause your consideration of this project. If the project remains a priority for the administration, we recommend selecting an alternative location for the Arch that more appropriately honors our nation's commemorative goals and our shared obligation to protect America's historic places.

The National Trust stands ready to work with you on advancing ethical stewardship strategies. Thank you once again for the opportunity to share our feedback on this proposal.

Chair and members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I testify on behalf of my grandparents, who are buried at Arlington National Cemetery. I want to protect the sacred place that holds them—and ensure that they, along with nearly half a million other patriots, continue to rest in a place that is light-filled, solemn, respectful, and peaceful.

Your statutory responsibility is clear. Whether appointed by the President or serving in an assigned seat, each of you holds a public trust to protect our nation's capital and the values it represents.

In July, you identified serious questions about the proposed Monumental Arch. The Department of the Interior has apparently submitted materials purporting to address those concerns. But receiving documents is not the same as resolving the issues.

Your responsibility is to conduct a thorough, independent, and transparent review against the capital's adopted planning framework and all applicable legal requirements. This is not only about whether the arch is attractive or its stated purpose patriotic. It is about whether it belongs where one man is relentlessly pushing to build it — and what a light-blocking arch of this size would mean for the character of the cemetery, Arlington Memorial Bridge, and surrounding historic properties.

Americans do not want this 12-member Commission to rubber-stamp this arch. You are bound by the honor of serving on this commission to scrutinize the Interior Department's assessments, exercise your own judgment, and resist political pressure to accommodate one individual's preferences.

Serious questions remain about the project's legal authority, including whether a 1925 congressional vote for two columns at Memorial Bridge is enough authorization for a 250-foot arch today. Congress and the courts will ultimately address those questions – along with the project’s funding, which is as vague and opaque as the funding for the President’s ballroom.

But you do control the decision before you today.

I urge you to take a courageous, independent, and thoughtful position. Do not rubber-stamp this proposal. Do not subordinate your statutory responsibilities to the wishes of a single President. And do not sidestep the very questions you identified as requiring scrutiny.

Your duty is not to satisfy one man. Your duty is to the American people, to our nation's capital, and to the historic places entrusted to your protection.

Please honor that duty.

Thank you. – Denise Roach, November 4, 2026

Mark Paoletta, chair

National Capital Planning Commission

401 9th Street, NW

Suite 500N

Washington DC 20004

Dear Chairman Paoletta and commission members,

Good afternoon. My name is Oona Schmid. My brother was Jonathan Kai Schmid and he was a veteran, injured in duty, and he is interred in Arlington National Cemetery.

Family members who have loved ones buried at Arlington National Cemetery expect their loved ones to be buried in a respectful and serene environment. Bright lights that burn at all hours, snipers, and ostentatious displays are not befitting of the sacrifices made. The cemetery should remain a solemn place of rest.

Second, the cemetery has a longstanding tradition of being nonpartisan. It is not appropriate for the grounds of the Arlington National Cemetery to house a partisan monument of any dimension.

I urge the Commission members to give respectful consideration to the veterans buried in the cemetery and the families of these service members.

Thank you for your time,

Oona Schmid

Arch statement of Daniel P. Cortez

I am Daniel P. Cortez from Stafford VA, United States Marine Corps Retired. I am a wounded Vietnam veteran that served 20 plus years in the Marine Corps and was decorated for extraordinary heroism.

I am part of the amicus brief being sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Korean War Veterans Association, The Chosen Few, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, and the Veterans for America First.

As the chairman of the National Vet Court Alliance, our group and several others were instrumental in passing the Veterans Treatment Court Coordination act of 2019.

We are a nonprofit organization that's dedicated to the prevention of thousands of veterans suicides that occur each year.

Sadly 17 or more veterans on the average commit suicide a day, due to combat and training stresses found in theater and garrison.

Our alliance works with and represent over 500 organizations like ours in the nation that establishes specialized veteran dockets in all U.S. Federal, state and tribal jurisdictions for those veterans that struggle with substance abuse and cognitive impairments, helping them obtain what they need to avoid unnecessary incarceration.

I am a court mentor with the Rappahannock Regional Veterans Docket in Spotsylvania Virginia.

What is clear to not only this veteran and our organization, but the petitioners of this brief is we acknowledge the arch and the present construction plan per the 1925 act permits the construction of this structure on Columbia island exceeding height restrictions that were set by the height of building decks and in my opinion in the opinion of others authorizes the immediate construction upon your approval of the proposed arch.

This structure like others in Washington such as the Lincoln Memorial, The Jefferson Memorial, the Washington War Memorial, World War I, II, Korean, Vietnam and Middle East Memorial to name a few, remain therapeutic and provide pride and demonstrates great patriotism.

Sadly I am aware of disgruntled Vietnam veteran malcontents who needed professional help then and need professional help now, refuse to see the arch as our other veterans see our patriotic monuments…. as a lifesaving a structure that enhance the graves of our war dead at Arlington National Cemetery and provides comfort to the living veteran and gold star families.

A reported recent attack on one of the Marine Corps most revered monuments, a copy of the Washington War Memorial located near my home in Triangle, Virginia, by an illegal alien rebuffed by Marine Corps recruiting officials, demonstrates the need not only to build this structure but employ responsible security measure perhaps in the form of drones to not only protect this structure but that of our other national treasures as well from demented agitators.

We who have given blood for our nation or just served honorably know these structures are not based on megalomania but pride, purpose, prayer and above all patriotism found on both sides of the aisle regardless of who sits in the White House or controls congress.

This arch similar in design such as others around the world honoring war dead and service of the living through prayer and patriotism will save lives and we implore this respected body to pass the requirement to construct this arch as soon as the law allows without delay as testament to the service of all men and women in uniform in further celebration of America's 250th anniversary.

Chairman Paoletta, distinguished Commissioners, and fellow Americans,

My name is Kimberly Taiko Moyers. I am a disabled United States Navy veteran and Director of Veterans Affairs for Conservative Action Now.

I stand before this Commission today in unwavering support of the Triumphal Arch.

My family has served this nation since its founding. My father served in Marine Corps Reconnaissance, my uncles in the Marine Corps, my grandfather in the Air Force, my great-grandfather during World War II, and today my niece continues that legacy in the United States Navy.

For 250 years, my family has answered America's call.

Abraham Lincoln spoke of sacrifices laid upon the "altar of Freedom." Ronald Reagan warned that freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. And Winston Churchill reminded us how much the many owe to the few.

Those words are not merely history. They are the story of American military families.

The Triumphal Arch represents more than stone and steel. It represents generations of Americans who stood watch, held the line, and paid the price of liberty.

As a disabled veteran, I understand that some sacrifices continue long after the uniform comes off.

As a veteran, I continue to lead from the front, answering the call to honor my ancestors, my friends, and the veteran community I proudly serve in Texas. My oath did not expire when I took off the uniform, and neither did my duty to those who served before me, beside me, and after me.

And as we approach Arlington National Cemetery, we must remember that beneath those sacred grounds rest Americans who gave everything.

I ask this Commission to preserve the dignity of Arlington while recognizing the profound significance this monument holds for families like mine.

We did not inherit freedom without cost. We inherited the duty to defend it.

And that duty did not end with those who came before us. We must continue to stand watch, defend the Constitution, and honor every American who sacrificed so that this nation could endure.

That is why this arch matters. It represents the very foundation of our freedom, the courage of those who secured it, and the solemn obligation of every generation to preserve it.

For 250 years, Americans have answered the call. We have not abandoned our watch, and we shall not forget those who never returned from theirs.

Let this arch stand as a testament to their courage, their sacrifice, and America's enduring promise to remember.

God bless our fallen, our veterans, our military families, and the United States of America.

Thank you, Commissioners, for your consideration.

Susan Boot Caolo

Good afternoon, Commissioners,

My name is Susan Boot Caolo, and I'm speaking as a private citizen.

My father, a World War II veteran who served 28 years in the U.S. Navy, is buried at Arlington National Cemetery with my mother. I go there at least twice a year. I visit my parents, and veterans I've interviewed for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project have asked me to pay respects on their behalf to comrades buried there. Every time, I go to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. That place belongs to everyone, and it means a great deal to people here and from around the world.

That's why I oppose the proposed arch. It would block the view of Arlington from across the Potomac. That approach matters. It tells every visitor they're coming to hallowed ground.

I'm not speaking only for my family. I'm speaking for every family with a loved one laid to rest at Arlington, and for every person buried there. Their service gives that ground its meaning, and its dignity and integrity deserve protection.

An arch in that line of sight would be a disservice to the solemn beauty and history of Arlington, and to the men and women who gave their lives in service to our country. They deserve that honor. I urge you to protect the view and reject this proposal.

Thank you for giving me this chance to speak up for myself and others.