TESTIMONY OF DAVID SCOTT PARKER TO THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

HEARING ON JUNE 4, 2026, REGARDING THE PROPOSED "TRIUMPHAL ARCH"

Thank you, Chairman Scharf and Commission members.

I'm David Parker, a practicing architect for 35 years and Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. As a preservationist, I appreciate your deliberation of the current proposal and would like to make a few observations:

First, the proposed arches' LOCATION at Memorial Bridge between Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln Memorial is a National Register listed landscape and site "*designed to create a physical and symbolic connection between the North and South.*" The overriding significance of this relationship created by Washington's 1902 McMillan plan to symbolize national unity, and the historic viewshed between these two solemn landmarks, cannot be diminished and should not be impeded. The fact that views will be obscured by the proposed structure from various vantage points is undeniable.

The HEIGHT of the proposed arch exceeds Washington's "HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS ACT OF 1910", which generally limits structures to a maximum of 130' and the NCPC Project Summary notes that the proposed 250' height of the arch has *yet* to be justified. The NCPC report also observes that the proposed arch is only 3000 feet from Reagan-National Airport (substantially closer than 2 miles minimum distance and 200' maximum height mandating FAA review) and that is in the immediate flight path of two major runways. All of which begs the question—*why this high*?

The proposed arch has been touted by the applicant as necessary to compete with other cities with its immense SIZE as a prerequisite to be *larger* than any other monumental arch in the World. This justification assumes that physical scale and DOMINANCE are more essential than meaning, or the appropriateness of scale to this very solemn setting and quite specific context.

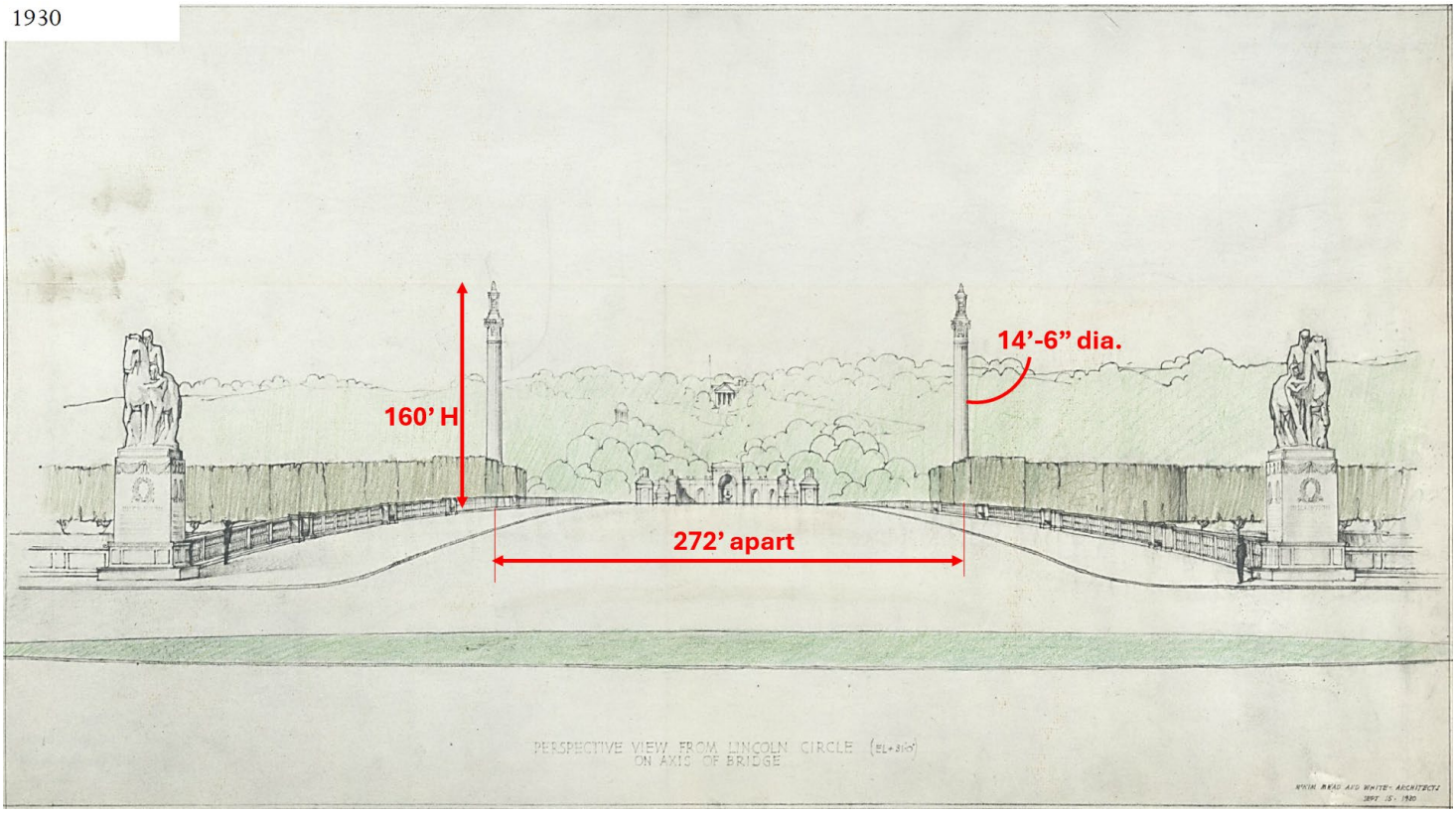
The SYMBOLISM of the proposed arch itself is contradictory and incongruent in this place. "TRIUMPHAL" arches throughout history have been built to "*symbolize specific military victory, imperial power and political legacy, or to honor victorious generals and emperors while acting as state propaganda*." The historical association of triumphal arches is inconsistent with the vague explanations currently being offered as a rationale for this immense structure.

According to the applicant, the PURPOSE of this arch "*is to celebrate the triumphs of the American people*" however the overriding solemnity of this specific location codified by the McMillan Plan is ignored by this very generalized trope.

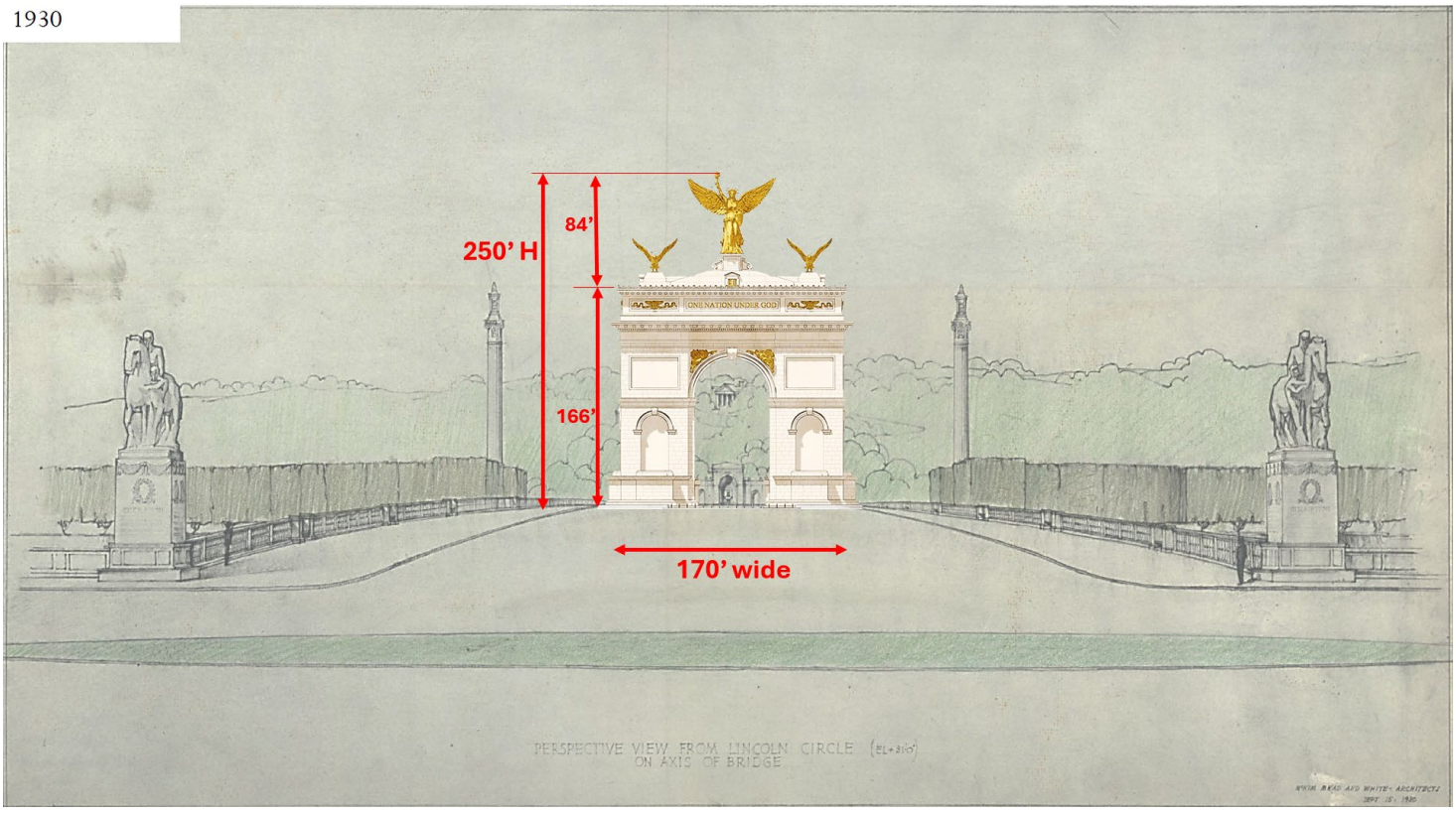
Additionally, the MATERIALS and ORNAMENTATION PROGRAM for the many surfaces and the immense 41'H x 21'W panels on all sides of the arch have not been defined. SCALE in renderings can be misleading, and each of these currently blank panels is as large as a four-story townhouse. *What will any inscriptions there say and who will any sculptures commemorate or glorify?*

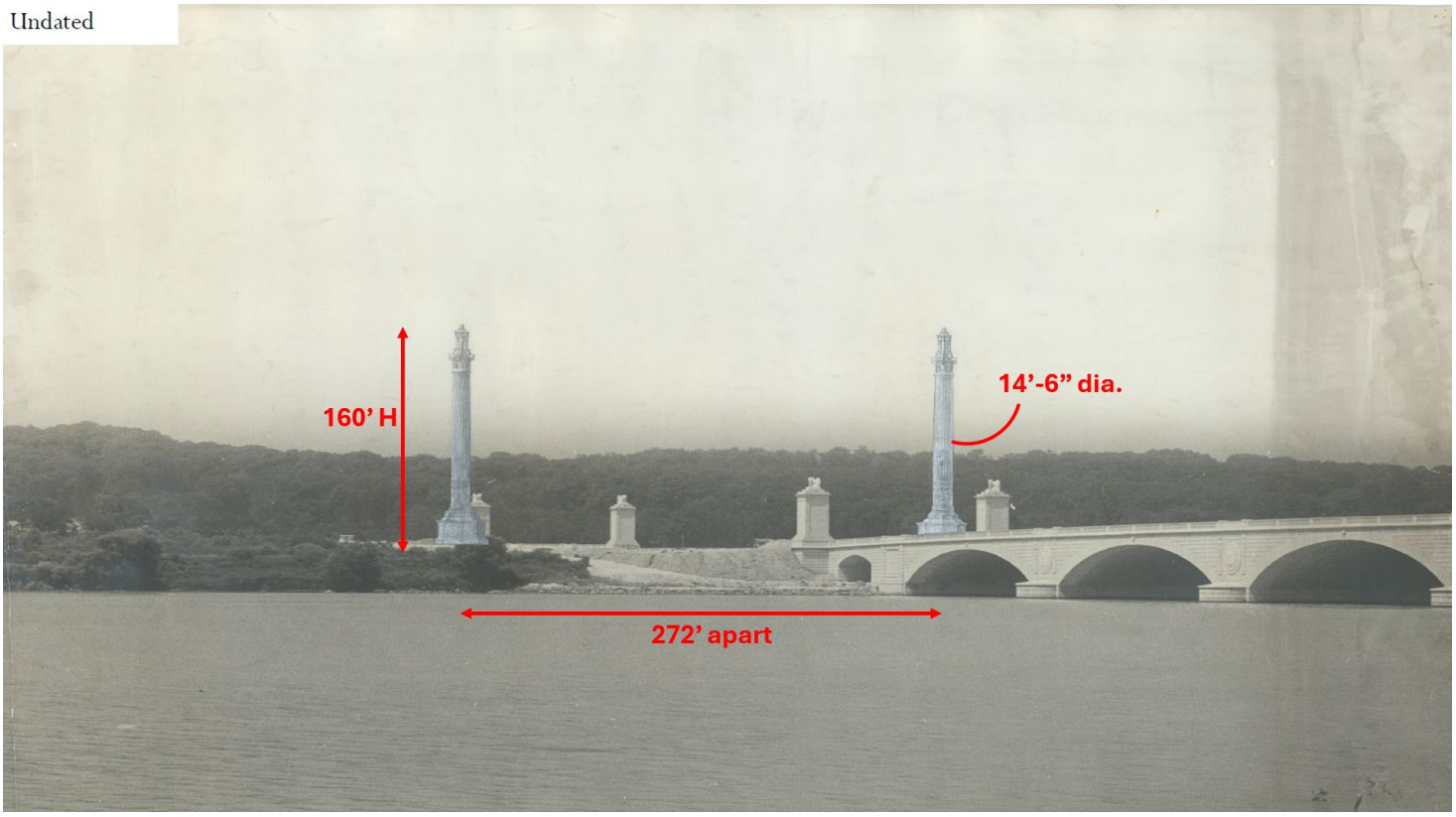
The “COMMEMORATIVE WORKS ACT” signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on November 14, 1986, requires that the proposal “*not interfere with, or encroach on, an existing commemorative work*,” and “*to the maximum extent practicable, [that] it protects open space, existing public use, and cultural and natural resources.*” Relative to this law, please review the comparative images below of a pair of tall columns once suggested but never built, which have been cited by the applicant as precedent for the current Triumphal Arch.

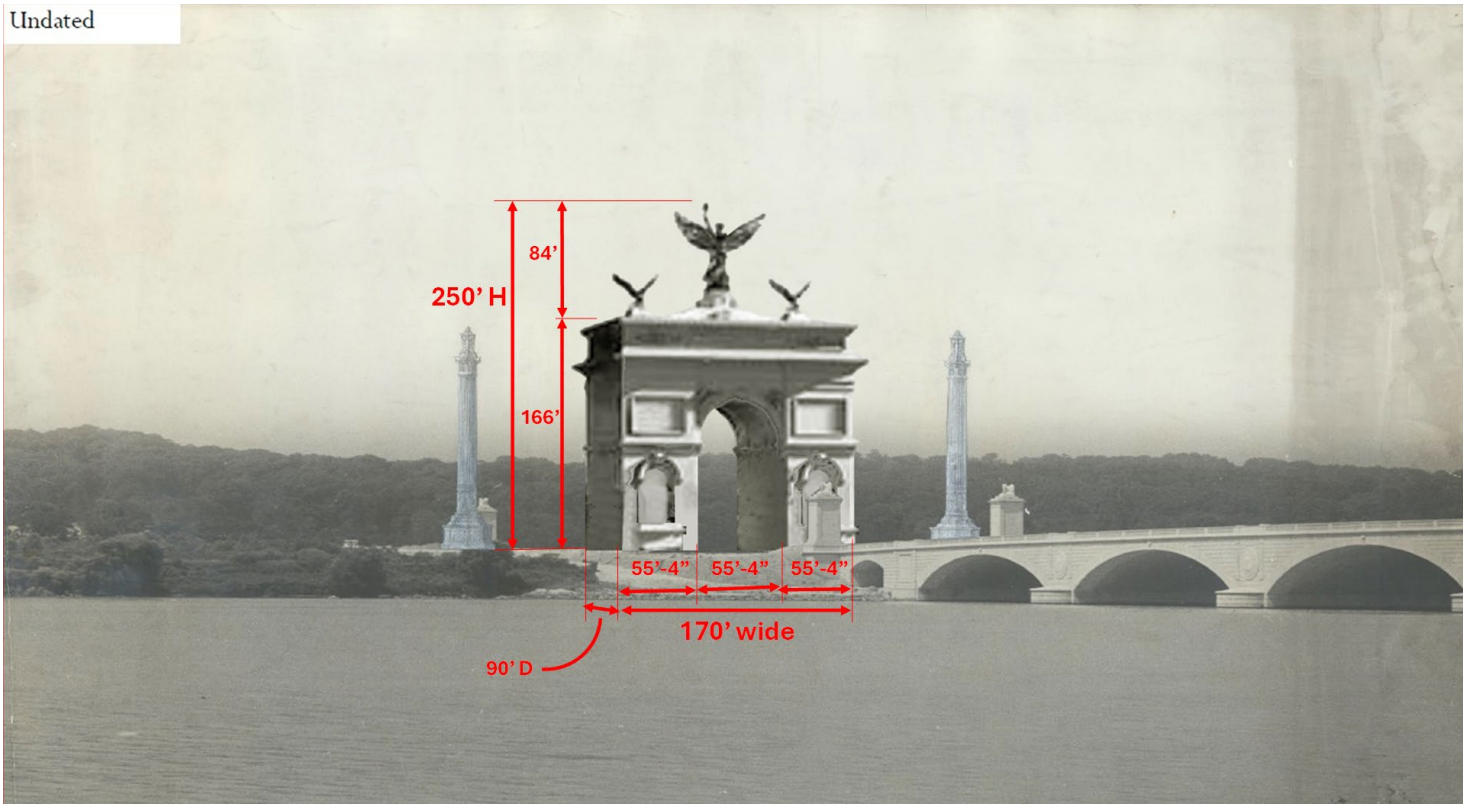
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The Commemorative Works Act requires that the current project be approved by Congress, and clearly the columns suggested but never built 100 years ago have nothing whatsoever to do with the current Triumphal Arch.

Thank you.

David Parker, FAIA