



**Public Testimony of Rob Nieweg  
Senior Vice President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Before the National Capital Planning Commission  
Regarding the New Monumental Arch Proposal**

Thursday, July 9, 2026

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the National Capital Planning Commission.

My name is Rob Nieweg and I speak here today on behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as the Trust's Senior Vice President for Preservation Initiatives. We're grateful for this additional opportunity to provide input on the New Monumental Arch proposal.

The National Trust already shared serious concerns with this Commission about earlier iterations of the proposal. To be clear, we strongly oppose construction of the Monumental Arch at this location for the following reasons:

**First**, the location and scale of the Arch would overwhelm nearby historic landmarks such as the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington House, and Memorial Bridge. It would be inconsistent with the solemn character of Arlington National Cemetery, and would mar the highly-meaningful vista across Memorial Bridge, which has long been defined by restrained grandeur in its memorials, and long open sightlines honoring the veterans buried at Arlington and national reunification after the Civil War.

**Second**, the proposal is inconsistent with Washington's urban planning framework. This Commission has applied the Height of Buildings Act to federal projects for the last 88 years. The result is a capital city beloved for its low horizontal skyline that rightly emphasizes the U.S. Capitol Building and the Washington Monument. We support the staff legal analysis that continues to apply the Height Act to federal projects. Abandoning this approach now would upend a consistent urban planning principle that has been a century in the making.

**Third**, federal law requires the review of the proposed Arch under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to be completed "*prior*" to approval by NCPC and other



agencies. The purpose of this review is an important one – to ensure that new construction does not needlessly harm the nation’s historic places without at least considering less harmful alternatives. While we were pleased to see this Section 106 process *begin* in recent weeks, we are deeply concerned about the limited nature of the consultation, the rushed timeline, the exclusion of many parties (including the National Trust) from the consultation process, and the failure to consider less harmful alternatives. We urge this Commission to fully consider the Section 106 findings before granting final approval.

**Fourth**, egregious flaws and significant uncertainties remain in the updated proposal under review today. Each new rendering submitted for this project underlines our primary concern, that the Arch proposal is totally inappropriate in its scale and location. The new images clearly show that the Arch blocks the view of the Lincoln Memorial from vantage points on the Virginia side. It looms larger on the skyline than everything other than the Washington Monument. From the District side, placing the Arch in the foreground completely overpowers the sacred rolling wooded hills and rows of white grave markers at Arlington National Cemetery.

**Fifth**, we disagree with the argument that the proposed Arch is not subject to the Commemorative Works Act. The Arch requires the approval of Congress, which has not yet been obtained, and we urge the Commission to proceed with your review in accordance with the requirements of the Commemorative Works Act.

We also support the suggestion by the DC State Historic Preservation Officer to consider alternative locations that would be more appropriate for this project. In a June 26 letter the SHPO proposed shifting the Arch to the base of South Capitol Street at the Anacostia riverfront. Moving the project to this location would avoid adverse effects on existing memorials. This location would also place the Arch on a direct axis with the U.S. Capitol Building, and would create a celebratory focal point for the bustling neighborhood that continues to emerge between Audi Field and Nationals Park. It’s a much more inviting and hospitable place for crowds of visitors to see the Arch. We urge the Commission to give serious consideration to this much less harmful alternative.

Thank you for considering the views of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.