

EQUAL HONOR FOR ALL

June 3, 2009

National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th Street, NW
North Lobby, Suite 500
Washington D.C. 20004

Re: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitors Center

Dear Chairman Cogbill and Members of the Commission:

Rimantas Ray Saikus for Equal Honor For All and as an individual maintain that the proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitors Center (VVMVC) revised design has not addressed the issues that make it such a controversial imposition on the National Mall and particularly on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial “The Wall” and the experience there. Its V-shape and slopped in-ground entrance still mimic the “Wall” . Its tunnel display format still emulates the Viet Cong tunnels, more a tribute to the Viet Cong way of life and that restricts the flexibility of the exhibit space plus requiring numerous protruding skylights into the Mall landscape. Contrary to and ignoring the VVMVC enabling legislation.

PROCESS ISSUES - The deplorable exclusionary and last minute notice process that has been promoted by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and so readily embraced and administered by the National Park Service dishonors those who are remembered on the “Wall” and gave their lives to deliver the ability of citizens of foreign lands to participate in their government, while believing that their service and sacrifice will guarantee the ability of their loved ones, their fellow service men and women, and their fellow citizens to participate in our government. If they had a voice and a choice you would hear them echo these sentiments in a way you would never forget. Also the role of Sally Blumenthal as a consultant to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund brings into question the integrity of the process that he previously administered.

TECHNICAL ISSUES - Since the beginning of our participation we have stressed that the underground conditions at the site are of paramount importance because of the admitted water table level and flooding conditions that require a levee plus sand bags at 23rd and Constitution Avenue. The design that is being entertained does not address the ramifications of this water table and in previous occasions, John Parsons of NPS, asserted that there is no issue with flooding. Now, when raised again by us in the last NPS VVMVC Section 106 on May 18th, 2009, the designers admitted that they are designing that they are building in water. Two issues that are very important in moving forward with a design, one is knowing the underground conditions of the site and the other based on those borings to bring in the expertise to incorporate those conditions into the

EQUAL HONOR FOR ALL

foundation design via a bathtub foundation. It is irresponsible to proceed without doing exploratory drilling to know the footprint conditions for the VVMVC

Because of the below ground level construction, the tapered walkways and sloped ground leading to the entrance of the VVMVC, the bathtub footprint for this facility will have to include the sloped area. This means it will have to be totally excavated and once the bathtub is built, the dirt will have to be returned. This extended footprint excavation will impact the Tree Roots and this design should not proceed without the engineering study and exploratory drilling to ascertain the underground conditions that will be affecting how this facility comes about.

The location for the VVMVC should be moved from this site, is not conducive for its intended role nor to allow the interpretation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as it was intended.

INTEGRITY OF VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL COMPROMISED –

DEFEND THE WALL for it is the ultimate example of remembering those who gave their lives for our country in equal honor. There is no identifiable reference to race, age, rank, nor there is an obvious distinction as to date of death nor of gender.

It is a timeless monument that has embraced millions in a unique way and will continue to do it into eternity if it is allowed to speak for itself.

How can we introduce an entity like the Visitor Center to distract from that unifying message, how can we expect the presentation of pictures to be equitable when you are dealing with 58,261 faces, how can we expect the stories to be presented at this Visitor Center to be a fair representation of 58,261 lives, who will choose whose face and whose story is more worthy to be presented to those who will come. What will be this story of patriotism and sacrifice.

And the most important thing is that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and its supporters in 2006, through legislation they sponsored in Congress, were willing to strip from the Families of those who we honor on the "Wall", the fellow veterans who served with those "Who gave their all", and our fellow citizens, the ability to participate and have a say from how this Visitor Center came about. This most disgraceful attempt dishonored those who we so revere on the "Wall", for they gave their lives attempting to deliver the freedom to participate in their government in foreign lands, yet the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and its supporters were determined to take that right away from us within our borders.

How can we trust the judgment of those who so readily are willing to deny us citizens of this nation what our special citizens on the "Wall" had died for delivering it in a foreign land.

EQUAL HONOR FOR ALL

Let the "Wall" tell its own story and take the interpretation away from it and incorporate it into the whole story of sacrifice throughout the history of our nation in a National Military Honor and Service Museum as proposed by Equal Honor For All.

You will find details of the attempted hijacking of our rights as citizens to participate in our government, the design flaws of the Visitor Center, and the proposal for the National Military Honor and Service Museum at www.equalhonor.org

The National Capital Planning Commission has to have the courage to go back to Congress to inform them of the ill informed decision that was made when the enabling legislation was enacted. This project does a disservice to those honored on the Wall, their families, those who also served during the Vietnam War, our citizens, and future generations for it is being pushed through while knowing that it is possibly a reasonable idea but at the wrong place and wrong conditions.

Respectfully,



Rimantas Ray Saikus, as individual and as President of
Equal Honor For All
P.O. Box 32070
Cleveland, Ohio 44132-0070
Direct Tel.: (216) 514-7001
E-mail: rrs@equalhonor.org