

# National Mall Coalition

June 15, 2026

Ms. Tammy Stidham  
Associate Regional Director - Lands and Planning  
National Park Service  
1100 Ohio Drive SW  
Washington, D.C. 20242

## **Re: Participation as a “consulting party” in the Section 106 process for the Triumphal Arch. Comments on the Arch project**

The National Mall Coalition hereby requests status as a “consulting party” to the proposed Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle undertaking. The Coalition submits the following public comments.

The National Mall Coalition, a grassroots nonprofit organization of architects, historians, planners, and concerned citizens, has worked since our founding in 2000 – including as a “consulting party” for numerous Mall-area projects – to protect the brilliant legacy of the historic 1791 L’Enfant and 1902 McMillan Plans for the capital and the National Mall and to ensure the vitality, beauty, and continued active role of the Mall in the capital and in American civic life.

Whatever one thinks of a triumphal arch, the location chosen at Memorial Circle will interfere with the brilliant historic plans, including L’Enfant’s inspired initial plan, that give our capital the visual and symbolic power revered by Americans and foreign visitors alike. An arch towering over Memorial Circle will break the continuous line from the Capitol to the Washington Monument to Lincoln and across the Potomac to Arlington Cemetery. It will sever the sublime vista and symbolism of post-Civil War reconciliation from Lincoln to Arlington National Cemetery and, for visitors to that sacred ground, from Arlington to Lincoln. Many veterans are justly opposing the arch for the damage it does to the view of Arlington Cemetery.

The Coalition sees scant evidence in the publicly available design review materials that the design team understands or respects the historic concepts embedded in the capital and the Mall, the Stage for American Democracy. On the contrary, the choice of a triumphal arch, its proposed location, and the colossal size signal an *intentional rupture* in the historic vision and the US Constitution-based symbolism that have defined the capital since L’Enfant’s plan in 1791 and the McMillan Commission’s expansion of that plan in 1902 to include the Lincoln Memorial and site for the Jefferson Memorial – a rupture totally at odds with the Enlightenment ideals that inspired the Constitution and the 1791 Plan.

The proposed arch’s violation of the capital’s historic planning foundations, along with NPS’s lack of a meaningful public review process, cannot be ignored or minimized. It represents, in the Coalition’s view, an affront to American democracy.

The Coalition urges NPS to send the project back to the drawing board unless and until basic questions can be discussed in a proper, lawful public consultation process, including: What is the *purpose* of a monument celebrating our 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary? What alternative symbolic forms – besides a victory arch

(what victory?) – could symbolize *e pluribus unum*, democracy, freedom? Where should a 250<sup>th</sup> monument most meaningfully be located? What meaning will a 250<sup>th</sup> monument add to the beauty and symbolism of the capital and the Mall? What do we want Americans and foreign visitors to take away from their experience of such a monument?

Congress declared the Mall a “substantially completed work of civic art” in 2003 and yet we continue to see proposed additions – in this case without Congressional authorization.

Overwhelming public outrage against the proposed Triumphal Arch is proof that this project has failed to satisfy, let alone seriously consider, these questions. As the project stands now, the Arch is a colossal symbol not of American democracy but of its precariousness in the face of a willful and careless administration. It’s time to recover respect for the capital’s visionary planning legacy and the public consultation process that sustains Americans’ faith in their democracy.

Submitted on June 15, 2026, by:

Judy Scott Feldman, PhD

Chair, National Mall Coalition

[jfeldman@nationalmallcoalition.org](mailto:jfeldman@nationalmallcoalition.org) /301-335-8490