



June 11, 2026

Dear Reviewing Official,

The Olmsted Network opposes the proposed 250-foot Triumphal Arch at the western terminus of Arlington Memorial Bridge. We believe the proposal would adversely affect the historic landscape of the Monumental Core and are concerned by significant shortcomings in the consultation process.

We write as stewards of a legacy directly tied to this landscape. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. was a principal author of the McMillan Plan of 1902 and played a central role in shaping the Lincoln Memorial grounds and their surroundings. The Olmsted firm's influence on this landscape is direct and well-documented.

The review process has not matched the significance of the resource. A ten-day public comment period is inadequate for a proposal of this scale, and the exclusion of qualified consulting parties — including organizations with direct expertise in this landscape who have requested consulting party status — is inconsistent with the purpose of Section 106, and the Commission of Fine Arts review did not provide sufficient opportunity for meaningful input. We urge the responsible agencies to extend the comment period and restore full consulting party participation before this review proceeds.

On the merits, the proposed arch would fundamentally alter a carefully composed landscape. The Lincoln Memorial serves as a hinge point linking the Reflecting Pool and Washington Monument to the east with Arlington House and Arlington National Cemetery to the west through Memorial Bridge—itsself designed to connect, both physically and symbolically, the North and the South. The views and spatial relationships that define this composition were deliberately developed through the McMillan Plan and subsequent planning efforts in which Olmsted Jr. played a central role. A 250-foot arch would introduce a dominant new feature into that composition, competing with the Lincoln Memorial and disrupting the visual and symbolic continuity of the Memorial Bridge axis.

Olmsted Jr. established this principle directly, opposing earlier bridge designs that included prominent towers at this crossing and warning they would be "like a slap in the face to the Lincoln Memorial and to the [McMillan] plan of which it forms a part." That judgment has guided this landscape for a century. It should continue to do so.

For these reasons, the Olmsted Network urges the responsible agencies to extend the consultation process, restore full consulting party participation, and find that the proposed arch would adversely affect historic properties within the Monumental Core. The proposal should not advance in its current form. Decisions made here set standards for how the nation's most significant public landscapes are treated — and for the generations who will inherit them.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Breitkopf', written in a cursive style.

Sue Breitkopf  
President