

# The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of The District of Columbia

Established Dec. 7, 1865

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AOI  
4425 Greenwich Pkwy,  
NW, Washington, DC  
20007-2010

202-342-1638

Luncheon RSVP's  
202-342-1865

Web site:  
[www.aoidc.org](http://www.aoidc.org)  
E-mail:  
[aoidc@verizon.net](mailto:aoidc@verizon.net)

September 1, 2011

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray  
Mayor of the District of Columbia  
The John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Re: The District of Columbia War Memorial

Dear Mayor Gray:

On the occasion of the re-opening or rededication of the District of Columbia War Memorial (World War I Memorial in Ash Grove), we hope that you will use the opportunity to support Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton's House Resolution 346 in opposition to renaming our memorial and renounce the efforts of West Virginia Senator John Rockefeller and Texas Congressman Ted Poe to re-designate the District's memorial as a national World War I memorial (S. 253 and HR. 938, respectively).

Additionally, we hope that you will use the information that the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia has provided you to support the designation of the American Expeditionary Forces/General John Pershing memorial as a National World War Memorial.

The efforts of Senator Rockefeller, Congressman Poe, the National World War I Memorial Foundation and others, seek to 'seize' our War Memorial and re-designate it a national memorial as no new memorials may be added to the National Mall. They obviously feel that the AEF-Pershing Memorial, prominently located between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Street on Pennsylvania Avenue (diagonally across from the John A. Wilson Building, directly across from the White House Visitors' Center, within two blocks of the National Mall, within one block from the White House and offering a commanding view of the U.S. Capitol at the opposite end of Pennsylvania Avenue) is somehow an unworthy location for a memorial dedicated to all Americans who sacrificed and served in World War I. We strongly disagree and sincerely hope that you do, as well. Improvements made to the AEF-Pershing Memorial to make it the National World War I Memorial (including appropriate interpretive signage, sculptures and engravings) are in keeping with the National Capital Planning Commission's "Monumental Core Framework Plan" and "Museum and Memorials Master Plan" which call for better use of parks and reservations for commemorative works located off the National Mall.

The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia -- the District's oldest civic organization -- was established on December 7, 1865, to preserve memories and matters of historic interest. By virtue of our long presence and participation in the city's prosperity and improvement, we continue to work and strive for the city's stability, security and advancement -- to aid in every way the prosperity and well-being of the District while preserving the heritage of its past.

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While we have not heard officially of plans to re-open or re-dedicate the District of Columbia War Memorial since its recent rehabilitation, we assume an event would be scheduled to coincide with its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Veterans' Day, November 11, 2011.

We strongly encourage you to leverage this opportunity to speak out in defense of our War Memorial, in support of the proposal to make the AEF-Pershing Memorial a National World War I Memorial and renounce the efforts of those who would further deny the residents of the District of self-determination by usurping our memorial which has proudly stood since 1931.

Thank you for your support in the important matter.

Sincerely,



William N. Brown, President

Cc: Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Chairman Kwame R. Brown, Council of the District of Columbia  
Honorable Jack Evans, Council Member Ward 2  
Cynthia Brock-Smith, Secretary of the District of Columbia  
David Maloney, District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer  
Marcel Acosta, Executive Director, National Capital Planning Commission  
Thomas Luebke, Secretary, U.S. Commission on Fine Arts  
Peter May, Chairman, National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission

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