

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

Established Dec. 7, 1865

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **THE AOI ASKS DC'S ELECTED OFFICIALS TO OPPOSE 'NATIONALIZATION' OF DISTRICT WAR MEMORIAL**

The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia, the city's oldest civic organization, is calling upon the District's elected leaders and residents to attend the re-opening of the District of Columbia War Memorial scheduled for Thursday, November 10, 2011 at 11 AM. The District's memorial to its men and women who served in the first World War was dedicated on November 11, 1931 and its re-opening is scheduled for the eve of its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We need to keep it exclusively devoted to the District's men and women who served in the first World War, as it has been since it was first dedicated on November 11, 1931 (Armistice Day) 80 years ago.

The memorial has been cleaned, rehabilitated and landscaped with more than \$2mil. of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar personally participated in a pre-rehabilitation clean-up at the memorial earlier this year. The restoration efforts have kept the memorial closed to the public for most of the intervening months until its re-opening on November 10th.

The restoration and re-opening of the District of Columbia War Memorial is significant in that currently there are attempts in both houses of Congress (See bills H.R. 938 and S.B. 253) to rename the memorial as part of an initiative to plan for and celebrate the centennial of World War I by establishing a commission to oversee the centennial. Unfortunately, in yet another attempt by the United States Congress and other private interests to ignore self-determination for the nearly 600,000 residents of the District, part of the legislation includes the renaming of the memorial to "The District of Columbia and National World War I Memorial." This is wrong on several fronts, the most noteworthy being that it ignores the rights of the District's residents and continues to ignore their desires despite the billions of dollars they pay in Federal Taxes. Secondly, the Peristyle Doric Temple located in Ash Grove on the National Mall in West Potomac Park is the District's War Memorial, **not** the World War I Memorial as when it was dedicated in 1931 the 1914-1918 conflict in Europe was referred to as The Great War or simply The World War and no numerical suffix was ascribed to the monument. Finally, the Association of

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the Oldest Inhabitants has strongly endorsed a suggestion that Pershing Park -- with its tribute to the American Expeditionary Forces and General John C. Pershing located on Pennsylvania Avenue between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets, N.W. -- would better serve as a National Memorial to the millions of U.S. men and women of all service branches who served in the first World War. The AOI of DC has testified in opposition to the pending Congressional initiatives before the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission and has worked closely with District of Columbia Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton as she introduced her own Congressional Resolution -- H.R. 346 -- to officially stand in opposition to co-opting and renaming our District of Columbia War Memorial. On Wednesday, November 2, 2011, the District of Columbia Council passed the "District of Columbia War Memorial Recognition Resolution of 2011" introduced by Chair Kwame Brown which "heartily supports the continued status of the District of Columbia World War Memorial as a local memorial honoring Washingtonians who served in World War I and those Washingtonians who died serving their country."

On the occasion of its re-opening on Thursday, November 10, 2011, at 11 AM, the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia calls upon its members, the membership of its fellow civic organizations -- The Federation of Citizens' Association and the Federation of Civic Associations and the Committee of 100 of the District of Columbia -- all District of Columbia preservation and historic associations, DC Vote, our Mayor and City Council to be present at the District of Columbia War Memorial to demonstrate our unwavering support for **our** memorial to **our** residents who served, were injured and killed in the first World War and to demonstrate our solidarity in opposition to it being renamed.

The D.C. War Memorial is located in Ash Grove along Independence Avenue directly opposite the new Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. It is accessible via the Smithsonian Metro Station's Agriculture Department entrance (SW corner 12th St. & Independence Ave., SW) and walking west along Independence Avenue or by parking in West Potomac Park and walking to the memorial via either the Franklin Roosevelt Memorial or the King Memorial via West Basin Drive.

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**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.**