

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

Established Dec. 7, 1865

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **THE AOI TO GATHER AT THE DISTRICT WAR MEMORIAL, PLACE WREATH, PRESENT DC COUNCIL RESOLUTION AND HONOR THE NAMES OF DC's WWI FALLEN ON MEMORIAL DAY 2012**

The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia, the city's oldest civic organization, is inviting Veterans, residents, the District's elected leaders and its membership to attend a Memorial Day gathering at the District of Columbia War Memorial on Monday, May 28th at 11 AM. The AOI invites everyone to join with them following the National Park Service's Memorial Day program at the World War II Memorial (scheduled for 8am) by walking the short distance along Independence Avenue to the recently restored D.C. War Memorial for the program. The program will consist of a wreath laying, the reading of the District of Columbia Memorial Day Resolution of 2012, informal remarks including an historical perspective by historian C.R. Gibbs and tributes to the 499 names on the memorial, the 26,000 who served and whose names are enshrined in the cornerstone and those from other historic sources.

The memorial is dedicated to the District's men and women who served and died in the First World War, as it has since it was first dedicated on November 11, 1931 (Armistice Day) 80 ½ years ago. The memorial was re-dedicated on November 10, 2011 after it was cleaned, rehabilitated and landscaped with more than \$2mil. of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. The restoration and re-opening of the District of Columbia War Memorial was 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 interests to ignore self-determination for the nearly 600,000 residents of the District -- part of the legislation calls for 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 desire for representation despite the billions of dollars they pay yearly in

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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. With the leadership of the *Evening Star's* Frank Noyes, who was an AOI member and whose brother Ted was an AOI President, and Frank's wife, funds were raised from District residents and its school children to fund the construction of the memorial. The inscription of the names of the fallen on the DC War Memorial is significant as they are listed in alphabetical order without regard to rank, gender or race.

As an alternative to the proposal to rename or 'nationalize' the DC War Memorial, the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants has recommended 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 and died 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 the House Committee on Natural Resources 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 and in support of focusing attention on Pershing Park as a fitting alternative. The District of Columbia Memorial Day Resolution of 2012 endorses the Pershing Park concept.

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. Attendees are strongly cautioned about being dropped off along that section of Independence Avenue as stopping is prohibited by police regulation and doing so is hazardous.

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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.**