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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

February 10, 2012

Mr. Preston Bryant
Chairman
National Capitol Planning Commission
401 9th St NW
Washington DC 20004

Dear Chairman Bryant:

I write today to share my concerns with the planned memorial honoring President Dwight D. Eisenhower. I fear that the process is being rushed, that the design lacks the approval of key individuals and will not have necessary public support.

Enclosed are two articles, one from the *New York Times* and the other an interview with Susan Eisenhower in *Washingtonian Magazine*. Based on these pieces, it seems clear that there is not the necessary level of support for the planning process up to now and that the design offered by Frank Gehry is unacceptable to Eisenhower historians and the Eisenhower family. When President Eisenhower's granddaughter, speaking for the family says "We are calling for an indefinite delay in the approval process and an indefinite postponement for the groundbreaking for the memorial until there is a thorough review of the design," I believe the National Capital Planning Commission should pause and address these important issues.

President Eisenhower was a towering figure of the 20th century, serving as a five-star general in World War II and as a two-term president. I agree with Susan Eisenhower that depicting her grandfather as a barefoot adolescent is inappropriate for a memorial on the National Mall and would not convey the importance of his achievements.

I know you take seriously your responsibility as a member of the NCPC to properly honor President Eisenhower. I ask that you reject the Gehry design, reopen the monument design process to other submissions, and ensure that there is broad public support for the final location and design of the monument.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

FRW:jf

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February 6, 2012

Eisenhower as Barefoot Boy? Family Objects to a Memorial

By **ROBIN POGREBIN**

Yes, it's true that Dwight D. Eisenhower referred to himself as "a barefoot boy" in 1945 when he returned home victorious to Abilene, Kan., after World War II. And it was in that image that the architect Frank Gehry found inspiration for the design of the official memorial to Eisenhower for which groundbreaking is expected this year on the Washington Mall.

The design shows Eisenhower as a youth gazing out at images of his adult accomplishments against a backdrop of the Kansas plains. But the Eisenhower family objects to the design and is attempting to delay approval of the project in a dispute that has pitted a leading American family against one of the country's most recognized architects. The family says Mr. Gehry should portray Eisenhower as a man in the fullness of his achievements, not as a callow rustic who made good.

"He was chief of staff of the Army; he was a two-term president of the United States," said Susan Eisenhower, a granddaughter. "It's in those roles that America has gratitude for him, not as being a young boy with a great future in front of him."

The family has asked that the project be delayed until its objections are addressed, and others have joined its cause.

"The statue of Ike as a Kansas farmer-boy mocks the president as cornpone in chief, the supreme allied bumpkin," said the nonprofit National Civic Art Society, which focuses on architecture and urban design.

Last month the Eisenhower family made public its concerns, which also include the memorial's scope and materials, upon realizing that the project was on a fast track, saying that its views were being disregarded. Mr. Gehry has so far not responded publicly. Officials overseeing the memorial's construction say they worry that a lengthy dispute would prevent the elderly veterans who are most enthusiastic about an Eisenhower memorial from seeing it.

The memorial application was submitted last month by the National Park Service on behalf of

the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission, which included the former president's grandson, David, until he resigned to work with the Eisenhower Foundation. The \$112 million memorial will be primarily financed by taxpayers and will be dedicated on Memorial Day 2015, 70 years after the war ended.

The National Capital Planning Commission, which must approve the preliminary design, said it received a letter from the Eisenhower family on Jan. 10 "expressing concerns regarding the design" and requesting a delay.

"The commission appreciates the comments provided by the Eisenhower family regarding this important project," Marcel C. Acosta, the executive director, said in a statement.

The general concept of the memorial's design and its overall configuration has been approved by the United States Commission of Fine Arts, which last fall praised "the sophistication of the design," and said "the proposed artistic treatment will transform the site and the context of adjacent federal buildings."

The job of building national memorials is often complicated by the conflicting views of various stakeholders. And the process can be particularly knotty when family members are involved. Theodore Roosevelt's relatives for decades quashed efforts to memorialize him, suggesting they were premature. Attempts by officials to erect a mausoleum for George Washington were stymied by relatives.

"The family kept on politely telling them, 'You can't have the body,'" said G. Martin Moeller Jr., the senior vice president and curator of the National Building Museum. " 'He's already been buried at Mount Vernon, and we're not giving him up.' "

Ms. Eisenhower said it makes sense for memorial makers to take into account the feelings of family members, who typically have the best sense of a person.

"The executor of my grandfather's will is still alive — and that's my father — and so are his children, four of us," she said in a telephone interview. "We lived on an adjacent property in Gettysburg. He came to my horse shows, he went to my sister's ballet recitals, he went to my brother's swim meets. We knew him well. So there's not that kind of remoteness when memorials are being designed for figures who died centuries ago. We at least should be allowed a voice given the fact that we knew him better than anybody else."

David Eisenhower has referred calls about the memorial to his sisters, but last month he told his family, "I am very relieved that the design issues have been reopened," according to Susan Eisenhower's Web site.

Mr. Gehry's design calls for a four-acre site partially enclosed by transparent woven metal tapestries that display images of the Kansas plains and hang between 80-foot-high columns. On a low stone wall sits a statue of the young Eisenhower. An artist has yet to be selected.

Anne Eisenhower, another granddaughter, said Mr. Gehry had initially indicated that he'd be open to the family's input and flexible about his design. "He's always said that he wants to work with us, and that he'd be delighted to make whatever changes are necessary," she said.

Mr. Gehry did not respond to calls and e-mails seeking comment; his assistant said he was traveling overseas. In testimony last year, he said that he was drawn to the project in part because he had served in the Third Army after Eisenhower became president. "So he was my commander in chief," Mr. Gehry said.

Susan Eisenhower said there was already a statue of her grandfather as a boy in Abilene, appropriately placed, she said, in the park where he used to play. "That's very different from putting a young Eisenhower in the nation's capital," she said. "To focus on his origins obscures a focus on his accomplishments, which I think is a lost opportunity."

The memorial is to be located on the Mall at the base of Capitol Hill, north of the Education Department.

Susan Eisenhower said the tapestries are metaphorically problematic in that they serve as a "barrier" between the memorial and the Education Department building, named for President Lyndon B. Johnson.

"My grandfather and Lyndon Johnson had a remarkably constructive working relationship," she said. "The American people long for genuine bipartisanship, and Dwight Eisenhower and Lyndon Johnson managed to accomplish a great deal together."

Brig. Gen. Carl W. Reddel, the executive director of the Eisenhower Memorial Commission, said he is concerned about a delay given the "mortality of the World War II veterans and Korean War veterans."

The commission's chairman, Rocco C. Siciliano, a lawyer and World War II veteran, is 89. The vice chairman, Senator Daniel K. Inouye, also a veteran, is 87. Mr. Gehry is 82. "They're all conscious of the passage of time," Mr. Reddel said.

But some say the creation of a memorial can benefit from delay. The Lincoln Memorial probably would not have included text of the Gettysburg Address had it been built in 1865, the year of Lincoln's death, Mr. Moeller said.

“At the time it wasn’t really regarded as an important speech,” he said. “Only later did it become iconic. Our attitude about specific individuals tends to change over time.”

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: February 6, 2012

Due to a Web production error, a caption on a photograph on an earlier version of this article on the Web site incorrectly described the location of a photograph that depicted Dwight D. Eisenhower in a 1904 camping trip. It was in Abilene, Kan., not Texas.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

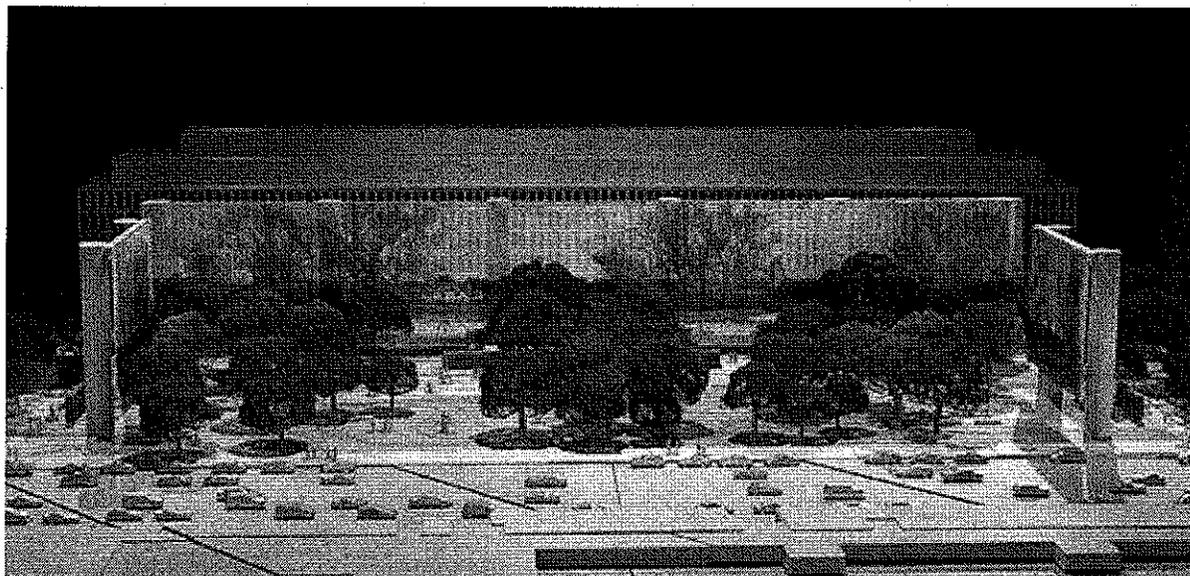
Correction: February 8, 2012

A picture on Tuesday with the continuation of an article about a dispute over a memorial to Dwight D. Eisenhower planned for the Washington Mall was published in error. It showed an older version of the concept for the memorial, not the most recent one. That image can be seen with the article at nytimes.com/arts. And the article referred incompletely to the approval process of the memorial by the United States Commission of Fine Arts. While the commission has approved the memorial’s general concept and overall configuration, it has not yet reviewed the central elements of the proposed memorial, including the statue of Eisenhower as a youth, and it has not given final approval to the design as a whole.

A Q&A With Susan Eisenhower About the Fight Over Her Grandfather's Memorial

Like many monuments erected in Washington, the one commemorating the last general-turned-president is stirring up conflict.

By Carol Ross Joynt



This view of the proposed Eisenhower Memorial shows the metal tapestries and the LBJ Department of Education in the background. Photograph courtesy of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission.

When it comes to presidential families, the Eisenhower family is among the quietest. Rarely do they speak up about anything, but that has changed dramatically as plans are finalized for the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial adjacent to the Mall. Last week the family members joined forces to protest the design by architect **Frank Gehry** and the speed with which the Eisenhower Memorial Commission is moving the project forward.

A letter sent to the National Capital Planning Commission read, "We are calling for an indefinite delay in the approval process and an indefinite postponement for the groundbreaking for the memorial until there is a thorough review of the design." It was signed by **Anne Eisenhower** with the note: "representing all members of the Eisenhower family."

Anne's brother is **David Eisenhower**, who resigned from the Eisenhower Memorial Commission in December. **Susan Eisenhower**, who is an author and an expert on international security and US-Russian relations, is another vocal opponent of the design. We talked with Susan about the memorial, the controversy, and what the family hopes to achieve.

The Eisenhower family does not strike me as a family that seeks out controversy. How did this happen?

There's been a long process, going back to 1999, in identifying architects and the site. The site selection was one of the first jobs. The controversy began emerging this summer when there was a change in concept. Originally the plan was to put Dwight Eisenhower's image on these metal tapestries. By summer, the approach changed to focusing on Eisenhower as a young boy. We had some concerns about that approach, and the more we looked into it the more we became concerned about other elements of the design—some fairly basic issues of scale, scope, and sustainability.

This all seems to have happened quite suddenly.

We were told in a meeting that the concept and design was on a fast track. If you look at the history of presidential memorials, it takes a long time to get them done. They [Gehry and the Eisenhower Memorial Commission] wanted to break ground this spring, and most Americans don't even know it's underway.

What can the public do if they share the family's concerns?

[The issue is] on the calendar for the National Capital Planning Commission in March. I would encourage people to involve themselves in this process.

Should they show up at the March meeting?

Yes, absolutely. [You can sign up to speak through the commission's website.]

There is a website called the Truth about the Eisenhower Memorial, which is quite damning of the process, Frank Gehry, and sculptor Charles Ray. Is the family involved with that site?

I don't have anything to do with it, and I haven't seen it, but I am familiar with the issue. I'm aware of the fact there are opposition groups to this memorial, and it should be of concern not only to the Eisenhower family but to anyone who is interested in a memorial to Dwight Eisenhower.

What do you know about accusations that Charles Ray's work "sexualizes" children?

Frank Gehry mentioned this sculptor's name before the National Capital Planning Commission back in November. It's completely inappropriate to focus on a young Eisenhower. That particular sculptor is inappropriate for a sculpture that is inappropriate.

In Abilene there's already a sculpture of a ten-year-old Eisenhower. It's charming and appropriate, because it's in Abilene of a boy who grew up playing in the park where it stands. Gehry didn't pick a new idea here. To focus on [his childhood for a memorial] in Washington, DC, loses an opportunity. Eisenhower was a 20th-century figure who became president and ushered in the space age. It seems odd that we wouldn't remember the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe in some kind of context.

Is there a Washington memorial that represents the spirit or style of what the family would prefer?

We don't want to get into prescribing any kind of design, but let's focus on the most popular memorials. They are powerful because of their simplicity. The most popular, in terms of

numbers of visitors, is Lincoln. What makes the Lincoln Memorial so powerful is that it doesn't try to do too much. In effect, it says that he saved the Union.

And that's what you'd like for your grandfather?

Yes. The problem with this [Gehry] design is that it's like a theme park. If you want to define appropriateness, just put him in a more traditional setting, in a more modest and sustainable way.

What would you rather it show—particularly the metal tapestries?

We'd rather not have them at all. No one has made a case for us that these tapestries will last for hundreds of years. They are finely woven mesh and are eight stories high. No one has convinced us that the most important feature of the design is sustainable. This is a huge maintenance issue.

What is your objection to the site?

It is [located] between the Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education and the Air and Space Museum. The objection we have is that the metal tapestry has its back to the Department of Education. The original concept was that this memorial was going to be a green square, called Eisenhower Square, and it was going to be open, which is symbolically in keeping with Dwight Eisenhower. He didn't have his back to **Lyndon Johnson**. They collaborated and cooperated and passed some landmark pieces of legislation.

Beyond writing a letter and speaking out, does the family have any power?

We are American citizens and taxpayers. I'm a Washingtonian. In terms of power, I'd like to think we have a prominent place as stakeholders in this. Of all the people who knew Dwight Eisenhower, we have a sense of obligation to him. My father was my grandfather's only surviving child. All of Eisenhower's grandchildren are my father's children: my brother and sisters, David, Anne, and a younger sister, Mary. All of us have children. My father is 89, and he signed a letter to put to rest [the rumor] that the family is not united on this issue. He called for a fair examination of the plans underway.

Who does have the power?

The power rests with the Eisenhower Memorial Commission. People should write to them, to the commissioners themselves.

Can the President intercede on your behalf?

I don't know the answer to that. Frankly speaking, it is a matter for a congressionally appointed commission. After all the controversy surrounding the Martin Luther King Memorial, we should take our time to get this right. The people rushing it through are not doing us a service.

Should the families of presidents and other public figures have a say in the memorials that honor them?

Every American should have a say in the memorials we choose to build in our nation. Family members have a special responsibility. In this case, as far down as my generation,