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TESTIMONY ON THE FUTURE OF THE NATIONAL MALL  
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND  
PUBLIC LANDS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

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Longworth House Office Building Room 1334

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Good morning, Chairman Bishop and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Thomas Luebke and I am honored to serve as Secretary to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. The Commission thanks you for the invitation to testify today and appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on the future of the National Mall.

The Commission of Fine Arts was created by an act of Congress in 1910 as a result of the planning efforts of the Senate Park Commission, initiated by Senator James McMillan of Michigan at the turn of the twentieth century. Since then, the Commission of Fine Arts has played an integral role in the creation and development of the National Mall as we know it today. The Commission is the principal federal agency for reviewing proposals for public and some private structures in the Nation's Capital; the Commission provides advice on design and aesthetics to Federal agencies, private individuals and organizations, and the District of Columbia government. Comprised of seven Presidentially appointed members selected for their expertise in the arts, the Commission has a particular role in guiding the design of national commemorative symbols—including monuments on the

National Mall in the Nation's capital, overseas military cemeteries, or coins and medals produced by the United States Mint—as worthy representations of our nation and its civic ideals.

The Commission has been actively engaged in realizing the full potential of the Mall as the Nation's public ceremonial space as envisioned in the McMillan Plan of 1902. The Commission has reviewed all design and construction on the Mall since 1910—including playing a key role in the siting and design of the Lincoln Memorial almost one hundred years ago. Most recently, the Commission of Fine Arts has reviewed plans for such additions at or near the National Mall landscape as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial, the Disabled Americans Veterans Memorial, and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture. In addition, the Commission has contributed an important voice in improving designs for many operational elements added to National Mall sites: security plans for the Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson Memorials and Smithsonian Institution museums; the design of the Potomac levee gate structure at 17th Street, N.W.; and the current reconstruction of the Reflecting Pool and Mall lawn panels.

In its active role in reviewing new projects on the National Mall, the Commission of Fine Arts works closely with many public and private organizations having an interest in the Mall, as well as with the National Park Service (NPS). In addressing the future of this treasured landscape, the Commission has cooperated with its Federal partners to alleviate the pressure of additional construction on the Mall; it collaborated with the National

Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) on *the Memorials and Museums Master Plan* of 2001. Building on the plan's goal to encourage the continued development of museums and commemorative works in other areas of the city, the Commission of Fine Arts and NCPC together created the *Monumental Core Framework Plan* in 2009, recommending the extension of the commemorative landscape into key areas of the surrounding city. The Commission has also been a key consulting agency in the development of the NPS' *National Mall Plan*, continuing a cooperative relationship with the NPS.

Included in the Commission's responsibilities is the approval of sites and designs of memorials under the Commemorative Works Act of 1986. I represent the Commission of Fine Arts on the NCMAC, the ex-officio body expressly established by Congress under this law to advise on questions of authorization, location, and design of national memorials. With this group of professionals who are involved so closely in planning and design of the public realm, Congress has a unique resource in considering and evaluating the often-competing interests for accommodating commemoration within the monumental core of the city.

The Commission of Fine Arts, since its creation as the primary design review agency in the Nation's Capital, has been committed to encouraging the highest quality of design for the development of the Mall as the Nation's premier civic space. We look forward to continuing our work with Congress, other agencies, and the public to achieve the strongest vision possible for the National Mall.

This concludes my testimony and thank you for inviting me to testify.  
I would be pleased to respond to any questions you might have.