

**Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center (VVMVC)  
National Park Service  
NHPA Section 106 Consulting Party Comments  
Ref October 18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007 Meetings and  
Proposed NCPC December 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

**From:**

Rimantas (Ray) Saikus, President  
Equal Honor For All  
P.O. Box 32070  
Cleveland, Ohio 44132-0070  
Tel. (216) 514-7001  
E-mail: [rrs@equalhonor.org](mailto:rrs@equalhonor.org)

401 9th Street, NW • North Lobby, Suite 500  
Washington, D.C. 20004  
Phone: (202) 482-7200  
Fax: (202) 482-7272  
Email: [info@ncpc.gov](mailto:info@ncpc.gov)

**To:**

Sally Blumenthal  
Deputy Associate Regional Director  
Lands, Resources and Planning  
National Capital Region  
National Park Service  
Tel. (202) 619-7025  
E-mail: [Sally\\_Blumenthal@nps.gov](mailto:Sally_Blumenthal@nps.gov)

Earl Powell, III, Chairman  
U.S. Commission of Fine Arts  
National Building Museum  
401 F Street NW, Suite 312  
Washington, DC 20001-2728  
Tel. (202) 504-2200  
E-mail: [Tluebke@cfa.gov](mailto:Tluebke@cfa.gov)

Martha Catlin  
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Consulting Parties  
DC Agencies

**CC:**

John V. Cogbill, III, Chairman (Virginia)

**NPS Section 106 - Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center (VVMVC)  
Concept, Location, Design, Logistics and Safety Issues**

**I. - General Observation and Comment**

These comments are submitted under duress and without complete record of all proceedings. We reserve the right to supplement this submission once the record and information requested is provided by the National Park Service (NPS). This preliminary submission does not abdicate our rights under the applicable laws.

Ray Saikus had an extended meeting with in depth discussion on Friday November 9, 2007 with the DC Watershed Protection Division (DCWPD) and information obtained calls for the DCWPD as well as FEMA, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and NEPA to be involved now and immediately invited as consulting parties by the NPS and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) to establish the viability of the VVMVC project as proposed. The individuals at DCWPD are Timothy Karikari and Diane Douglas. Based on information obtained during those discussions it is also necessary to do a complete study leading to a thorough Environmental Impact Statement and critical review of all costs associated with water table effect remediation and storm water control. The need for Man Made Intervention (sandbagging) in the vicinity is another reason for the Levees not being certified by the USACE. The nearness of the flood plain, the height of the water table and in combination with runoff and major rainstorms, makes the proposed VVMVC site and design (ramped entrance and open courtyard) undesirable and a major risk, a facility that will have visitors and house irreplaceable artifacts.

The design mimicking the Vietnam Veteran Memorial "the Wall" is unacceptable for it takes away from the dignity, ambience, experience, and uniqueness of the "Wall".

The US Commission of Fine Arts (USCFA) October 18<sup>th</sup> review of and the NCPC hearing on the VVMVC proposed design scheduled for December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007 have and are premature and subvert the Section 106 process, condescending and contributing to the abuses by the NPS and the VVMF. We request that the December 6<sup>th</sup> presentation be cancelled by the NCPC as the controlling agency due to the fact that the Section 106 process has not been followed by the NPS and that the consultation process is incomplete, lacking critical elements for proper consideration by the NCPC.

Concept of telling the story of the nation's defenders is admirable, but the enabling legislation, the aborted legislation to remove veterans and citizens from participation, this NPS conducted Section 106, the site selected and the design being pursued are examples of the worst that can be brought forth on the nation in the name of those who we are trying to honor, their families, the veterans who served alongside them at the time of their loss, and all who served during the Vietnam War, and detrimental to the interests of the citizens of our nation, those who served before Vietnam and after, as well those who are serving our country now and their families.

The NPS and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) are bullying this process through and trying to execute what the aborted legislation attempted to accomplish. Through the unreasonable scheduling of meetings, failure to deliver

material requested, and circumventing and violating the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the NPS is depriving veterans and the public of the opportunity to participate in an informed and timely manner. These actions show that the NPS has no respect for the consulting parties, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the USCFA, NCPC and other government agencies that should be involved.

When their agencies are engaged in a process at the request of another agency, the USCFA and the NCPC need to assure that the NHPA is followed, veterans and citizens are respected, the ACHP guidance is respected. Most importantly that the NCPC and the USCFA are not facilitators for the abuses that the NPS and the VVMF have perpetrated and are trying to continue.

The ACHP has to assert its role as the administrators of the NHPA so those who have committed to bring forth the best for our nation and what its defenders deserve are not deprived of executing their duty and participating in our democracy.

Separating the Vietnam Veterans story from the rest of the Veterans does a disservice to those who we are trying to honor. The VVMF, as the promoter of the enabling legislation for the VVMVC, has created division among the various generations of veterans by including a moratorium, in the same legislation, on any other equivalent visitor center.

The presence of the VVMVC next to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (the "Wall") infringes on the interpretation of the "Wall" and its independence in the relationship with those who visit it. The intended display and building layout assumes a faultless exhibit, delivering a sense of arrogance on the part of those promoting and those designing the VVMVC. Forcing visitors to flow through the exhibits like cattle in the ramps leading to the slaughterhouse rail cars and depriving the space and time for contemplation, are insensitive to the memory of our fallen, their families and fellow Veterans, and the claimed purpose of this project.

Adding the faces and stories at this memorial site creates a sense of inequality, detracts and is contrary to the intended tribute of Equal Honor for all remembered on the "Wall". For a life given, its value should not be diminished by comparing the accomplishments prior to that equal and unselfish sacrifice. The families of those who we honor should not be subjected to a comparison of achievements and someone subjective interpretation of what is valuable to pass on. Another location, removed from this site can attempt this. The military cemeteries dedicated to our nation's defenders across our nation and other parts of the world recognize the need for the uniformity of honor.

The "Wall" has eloquently accomplished this and this project tries to add another chapter to a completed piece of work, the story's end is this site, and the message of the "Wall" and the sacrifice that it represents need no further explanation. Memory of those who are honored on the "Wall" remains in the hearts and souls of loved ones, friends and fellow Veterans, across generations. Assuming that families, as well Veterans, will be able to travel to see the images at a particular time of year based on a fallen's birthday is another example of theatrics and the lack of understanding and sensitivity as to what is important to memorialize and present to current and future generations. The dated placement on the "Wall" commemorates their contribution and the significance of why we honor them, what evokes remembrance and reflection.

We have challenges in having people respect our flag and anthem and each other, it would be better to teach, by example, self-respect to our youth at home, in our schools, and in our media, and then we will not need to worry about them respecting others and explaining the sacrifice of those who gave their all and those who served and their respective families.

Below is a general but incomplete summary of clarifications for the record, concerns and suggestions. It is what we are communicating to our fellow veterans and the citizens.

## **DEFEND THE "WALL"™**

### **Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Risk**

We are addressing these issues to the families of those honored on the "Wall", fellow Vietnam Veterans and your respective families, and caring citizens.

Your commitment to honoring the sacrifice and preserving the Vietnam legacy elicits of you to know what is going on around the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM). Time is critical and immediate action needs to be taken to protect this sacred place.

Two projects, the proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center (VVMVC) and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), will have significant adverse impacts on the experience, dignity and serenity at the VVM, the "Wall".

Please read through the material provided at this website, research the links supplied, and share the information with others.

We believe you will arrive at the same conclusions. Please address your concerns to your United States Congressional

representatives in both the [House](#) and [Senate](#), as well as the [National Capital Planning Commission](#), the [National Park Service](#), the [United States Commission of Fine Arts](#), the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund](#), and the [United States Institute of Peace](#).

Veterans and Citizens action plan is below. Make your voice and service to our nation count.

Please send a copy of all communications (sent and received) regarding these issues to Equal Honor For All (EHFA) at [info@equalhonor.org](mailto:info@equalhonor.org) or Equal Honor For All P.O. Box 32070 Cleveland, OH 44132-0070

## About Equal Honor For All (EHFA)

Involvement in the VVMVC process and project by Ray Saikus of the EHFA came about through the National Trust For Historic Preservation (NTHP). The National Coalition to Save Our Mall did not recruit Ray Saikus as claimed by the VVMF. Ray Saikus was informed of the project by the NTHP, in particular Betsy Merritt, because they knew Ray Saikus was a Vietnam Veteran and active in the veterans community and had lost his best friend in Vietnam. The "Wall" is very dear to Ray Saikus and to his best friend's family.

Ray Saikus had worked with the NTHP on other preservation projects defending the right of citizens to participate. It did not take any convincing to get him involved upon learning about the exclusionary legislation that was being promoted by the VVMF and being considered in Congress in the Spring of 2006, specifically the US Senate, it had already passed the U.S. House without any public hearings. It was a direct insult to those who gave their lives for our freedoms and are honored on the "Wall" as well as their families and those who had served during the Vietnam War and their respective families, and our fellow citizens.

The EHFA was born out of that experience, it is an organization committed to uniting all veterans and their families.

The goal of the Equal Honor For All organization is to leave a legacy about those who served our nation throughout its history in a place of "Equal Honor For All" and live up to the motto of the Vietnam Veterans "Never again will one generation of Veterans abandon another".

This vow EHFA will fulfill by establishing a National Military Honor and Service Museum where the nation and its citizens will honor and remember those who came before us going back to the Revolutionary War, our fellow Vietnam era brothers and sisters in arms, those who followed us. This special place will also allocate space for current and future generations of our nation's defenders to be honored and remembered.

For further detail of organization involvement visit [EHFA](#).

## About the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center (VVMVC)

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) is the sponsor of the VVMVC. The enabling legislation ([Public Law 108-126 Nov. 17, 2003](#)) for the VVMVC has many troubling and divisive aspects for veterans of all eras. These include the VVMVC being built underground and restricting any further visitor centers on the National Mall for the remaining veterans memorials. This last provision being totally contrary to the Vietnam Veterans motto "Never again will one generation of Veterans abandon another", and disenfranchising fellow veterans from other eras as well as their families and friends.

Another very disturbing action by the VVMF in promoting the VVMVC was when last year the VVMF tried to have a legislations (S. 2419 and H.R. 4882) passed. Once passed the law would have excluded all, the families of those honored on the "Wall", veterans and citizens, from participating in how and where the VVMVC is developed, in direct violation of the VVMVC enabling legislation.

The US House had passed the bill ([H.R. 4882](#)) without even a committee hearing allowing public input. Fortunately the US Senate, through its Sub-Committee on National Parks, held a hearing on their version of the bill ([S. 2419](#)) on May 16, 2006 and did not allow the bill to become law. The late Senator Craig Thomas was the Chairman over the Sub-Committee at the time of those hearings, he and his fellow Senators were respectful of the veterans and their fellow citizens. Ray Saikus of EHFA had the pleasure and honor to testify at that US Senate hearing, opposing the S. 2419 and H.R. 4882 legislations.

Lately, the National Park Service (NPS) has been trying to ram the VVMVC project through with total disregard for the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process and scheduling meetings with little notice to discourage/prevent from

participation the various consulting parties involved in the review, another action in direct violation of the VVMVC enabling legislation.. Ray Saikus of Equal Honor For All is participating as a consulting party on behalf of EHFA and as an individual.

The NPS has also ignored issues raised concerning the impact for generations to come on the VVM (dignity, interpretation and serenity at the "Wall"), the gouging of our National Mall (next to the Lincoln Memorial and the "Wall"), the safety and security of the VVMVC (visitors, staff, site, building structure and contents), the VVMVC design mimicking the "Wall", and the exhibits space and layout being totally restrictive (removing any ability to alter it in case the visitors experience and appeal is not realized as envisioned at this time).

Images available here of the proposed VVMVC design were provided to the NPS by the architectural firm contracted by the VVMF. In turn sent to all consulting parties, and are part of the public record. If you desire the complete VVMVC proposal booklet from the National Park Service (NPS), please petition a copy via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to Steve Lorenzetti, Acting Superintendent, [Steve\\_Lorenzetti@nps.gov](mailto:Steve_Lorenzetti@nps.gov)

The following are issues of great concern:

A – Proposed to be built underground (30 feet) in an area susceptible to flooding from storm run-off, flood plain under evaluation, and in an area next to a designated flood prevention site that requires sandbagging. The Potomac River is susceptible to the tide surges from the Atlantic and the storm surges. Storms are more frequent and more severe than any time in the history of the Washington D.C. area.

B - Washington sewers backed-up as recent as the storm in June of 2006, flooding a portion of Constitution Avenue and those investigating it could not readily identify the specific reason.

C - The Lincoln Memorial's below ground level had flooding.

D – Three VVMVC design options presented on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at the National Park Service (NPS) Section 106 meeting by the architects selected by the VVMF had the following shortcomings:

(Please note that on September 12<sup>th</sup> the design renderings were requested in electronic form so they could be shared with our fellow veterans and to date none have been provided - the images provided had to be scanned from a printed booklet)

1 - The sloped v-shaped 14 feet deep entrance design would mimic the "Wall", detract from our memorial, and being so close will negatively affect the flow of visitors to the "Wall" and will affect their experience there.

2 - Single entrance and exit, no evidence of suitable emergency exits for the potential number of visitors, a facility susceptible to sabotage due to high density of visitors based on the popularity of the "Wall". Handicap access and especially emergency exit considerations are not clear.

3 - An open courtyard 31 feet deep, with a (tunnel weave-cattle herding) exhibit area leading down to the courtyard, allowing no flexibility for varying the exhibit as time and needs might dictate – no allowance for misjudgment of appeal to families of those honored on our "Wall", Vietnam Veterans and families, and visitors.

4 - Below ground level 42" high rails placed in a ditch surrounding the top of the courtyard and at all the elevated areas around the entrance, would remind many of the Punji Stick traps in Vietnam.

5 - Looking up from the courtyard, it will give a reminder of the POW in-ground cages, especially with the guard rails above them, or from above as punji stick traps.

6 - During storms, the sloped area around the entrance will channel massive water flows towards the entrance, endangering the staff, visitors, and our eras and our "Wall's" priceless artifacts.

7 - During storms, the open courtyard will be susceptible to massive inundation, again endangering the staff, visitors, and our eras and our "Wall's" priceless artifacts,

8 - During the winter there will be danger from ice formation that would form around the perimeter of the courtyard and all elevated areas because of the ditch design for the guardrails. Ice braking off and falling on visitors.

9- The exhibit space will move people in a cattle herding tunnel manner.

10 - Courtyard takes up much needed exhibit space.

11 - Security and safety of the site has not been properly evaluated, the VVMVC could be a target of sabotage just as our "Wall" has been recently. The design does not address those issues.

E - The Five Hundred Year Flood Plain designation for the area allows for at least a foot of flooding anytime. If the topography is correct, the whole area of the VVMVC could be underwater.

F - There is indication that a more recent flood analysis is available that places the VVMVC within the 100 year flood plain but a copy could not be obtained at this time.

About the  
**United States Institute of Peace (USIP)**

Another issue regarding the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the proximity and overpowering size of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), it is in the line of sight of the "Wall". Files attached with the USIP project. Daylight views from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial are also attached, before and after. On overcast days and at night it will be more imposing, like an alien space ship coming in for a landing, especially to those at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (the "Wall").

The VVMF, represents itself as the keeper of the "Wall". From information available on the USIP proceeding the VVMF has not participated in representing the interest of the VVM and evaluating the impact of the USIP on the experience at the "Wall".

We have to be concerned regarding the presence of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in such close proximity to our Memorials in Washington. It seems that the USIP might be exploiting those who we honor on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial ("Wall") and the other Veterans Memorials (Korea and WWII) for purposes other than promoting peace. The USIP institution's name, location logic, and mission statement is not necessarily supported or clear because of the background and composition of its leadership, as well as its reported activities. Investigate it yourself independently and see the information below.

Some very relevant information for Vietnam Veterans is: "The president of the institute since 1993 is Richard H. Solomon, formerly a senior staff member of the National Security Council. Solomon made his bones working for the RAND Corporation, the think tank that designed the Vietnam War"- this information comes from the Article "Peace Spooks".

For further information and to draw your own conclusions please visit and read the article titled "Peace Spooks" at <http://www.bohemian.com/bohemian/07.04.07/byrne-0727.html>

Due to the USIP's grandiose building and primarily because of the composition of the USIP board and leadership with their respective backgrounds and missions, it will be a primary target for terrorists. Because of its close proximity, the USIP will have grave safety implications for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) and the proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center (VVMVC) . VVM and VVMVC could become backup targets for the terrorist focusing on the USIP.

There are additional implications regarding the USIP's proximity to the VVM and the VVMVC. The concern raised is that based on the article above there is potential for protests against the USIP, with the VVM and proposed VVMVC sites becoming rallying points for protesters. The USIP presence would directly affect the ambience required to allow for reflection and the opportunity to pay one's respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Peace will be robbed from the Vietnam veterans, their families and especially the families of those honored at the VVM. It will also affect the ambience of the Korean and WWII Memorials.

The USIP ([www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)), an 8+ story building, will be a great overpowering detraction from the experience at our "Wall", in all weather conditions, daytime and nighttime.

Daylight views from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial show the detraction that the USIP will be, images can be provided via e-mail upon request. At night it will be more imposing, like an alien space ship coming in for a landing, especially to those at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (the "Wall").

## **VETERANS AND CITIZENS ACTION PLAN**

Spread the word by sending notices to your fellow veterans and citizens and link them to the EHFA ([www.equalhonor.org](http://www.equalhonor.org)) website. Encourage them to invest the time and participate, to ask and have the concerns addressed by Congress. The Congressional legislations created most of these problems because the details of this project were not brought forth and properly evaluated as to the impact on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial .

Become well informed on the issues and the parties participating. Visit the National Trust For Historic Preservation ([www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org)), National Coalition to Save Our Mall ([www.savethemall.org](http://www.savethemall.org)) and ([www.nationalmall.net](http://www.nationalmall.net)), Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund ([www.vvmf.org](http://www.vvmf.org)), the United States Institute of Peace ([www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)).

Express your opposition to the USIP overwhelming and controversial presence by our memorials. Communicate your objections to the VVMVC location and design and its detraction from the intended purpose for the "Wall". Call and write your Congressmen/Congresswomen ([www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)), Senators ([www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)), objecting to the USIP presence at this site and the VVMVC location and design. Ask for joint Congressional oversight hearing. Also call and write the National Park Service ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)), the National Capital Planning Commission ([www.ncpc.gov](http://www.ncpc.gov)), the United States Commission of Fine Arts ([www.cfa.gov](http://www.cfa.gov)). It is not too late if you act now.

It is time to speak up and let our voices be heard loud and clear across our nation and especially in Washington, D.C.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This site is not suitable for a building of such purpose because of the constraints about being built underground and the preexisting natural water/flood conditions that will endanger the memories and artifacts that we are trying to preserve. If this project proceeds even with private funding, the construction and structural costs will be exorbitant and the taxpayers will be inheriting a bottomless pit in maintenance costs.

It is also not suitable to have a building of such magnitude built on this site above ground for it will take away from the grandeur of this magnificent open space mall. Our country's front yard to the world and to the rest of the nation will be destroyed.

We urge the promoters of the VVMVC project to expand their vision and consider supporting the establishment of the National Military Honor and Service Museum as proposed by the Equal Honor For All organization. We invite them to take the opportunity to help us leave a unique and unprecedented legacy for future generations in relating the sacrifice of our nation's defenders and their families.

The Vietnam veterans will forever be remembered fondly and with respect for being the leaders in this effort and living up to and delivering on their motto of "Never again will one generation of Veterans abandon another". Lets embark on creating the space of "Equal Honor For All" and telling the story of those who made the ultimate sacrifice and those who served throughout the history of our country, starting with the Revolutionary War and assuring a place of honorable remembrance for future generations of our nation's defenders.