



Newsletter

August 2026

Please Support DCPL's Legal Advocacy Fund

Advocacy Update

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Votes to Amend Section 106 Regulations, Leaving the Public Out of Consultation

In July, the [Advisory Council on Historic Preservation](#) (ACHP) proposed changes to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) that raise concerns about preserving historic sites and the public's ability to engage with these cultural resources.

By altering the review process for federal projects that impact historic properties, these changes would diminish local input and oversight under the pretense of a streamlined review. This reduction in public participation would limit communities' ability to voice their opinions and protect sites of cultural and historical significance. Because these sites are funded and maintained with taxpayer dollars, reduced public involvement could lead to decisions that prioritize development over preservation, ultimately undermining the community's connection to its heritage.

These proposed changes contradict the ACHP's mandate to promote the preservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of the nation's historic resources. Established in 1966 by the NHPA, the ACHP advises the President and Congress on national preservation policy.

For more information, visit the [Cultural Heritage Partner's War Room](#) and stay tuned for a call to action to respond to this effort that threatens the preservation and protection of our country's historic resources.



Image released by the Secretary of the Department of Interior.

East Potomac Park (Golf Links Redesign)

"I favor a freer use of public parks by the people than we have had in the past. They should be used for tennis, baseball, skating, golf, and like games...I think all our parks should be opened for golf unless there is some specific objection in public needs." - President William H. Taft (in support of the development of public golf courses in the District of Columbia, February 1913)

Established by an Act of Congress in 1897, East Potomac Park is designated for the recreation and enjoyment of the people. The golf links were built from 1918 to 1923 and designed by renowned golfer



Rendering of the Triumphal Arch.

Triumphal Arch (Memorial Circle)

Plans are moving forward for a 250-foot-tall Neoclassical "Victory Arch" at Memorial Circle on Columbia Island, positioned directly between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery. This structure would overshadow the 99-foot-tall Lincoln Memorial and disrupt the historic views of Arlington House. Local preservationists and the public have strongly opposed the project, and a coalition of Vietnam War veterans has filed a lawsuit to prevent its construction, arguing that it would alter the solemn atmosphere of Arlington Cemetery.

In July 2026, the project received

Walter J. Travis. In 1941, the course was the site of efforts to desegregate the city's public golf courses.

East Potomac Park's Mini Golf Course was built in 1931 and is one of the oldest continually operating miniature golf courses in the United States.

Today, the public uses East Potomac Park for a multitude of activities, including amateur golf, fishing, bicycling, running/walking, bird watching, and picnicking. But this public access is threatened by the Trump Administration's Washington National Plan, which would redesign the historically protected, municipal golf property into a championship-level facility and potentially limit public access for the additional recreational activities that take place in the park.

DCPL and two citizens filed a federal lawsuit in February 2026 claiming the administration has failed to conduct mandatory environmental and historic resource reviews as required by the Administrative Procedure Act (APA).

Active litigation is ongoing in federal court. Since our July 2026 newsletter update, the National Park Service has initiated Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which requires the federal government to take into account the effect of this proposed redesign on the historically significant park, make every effort to avoid and minimize impacts, and, if it's impossible to avoid, mitigate.

While Section 106 consultation has been initiated, the initial consulting parties meeting was canceled. The court has also been clear that, despite President Trump's announcement that work in East Potomac Park would begin September 1st, there will be consequences if the government moves forward without completing the steps required by law.

concept and site approval from the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), despite more than 3 hours of testimony opposing the Arch. NCPC will take up the issue of the 1910 Height of Buildings Act at a later meeting this fall. NCPC has historically followed the act; however, the applicant and NCPC Chair contend that it does not apply to federal buildings or monuments. DCPL disagrees.

Arlington County's Planning Division comment letter from June 2026 raises concerns about the Arch's height being in conflict with FAA-approved procedures for airplanes approaching and departing Reagan National Airport.

The letter states the following: "A key element of this coordination [with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA)] is the One Engine Inoperative (OEI) condition, which requires FAA approved departure corridors in the event of engine failure during takeoff. All airlines are required by the FAA to establish approved OEI procedures identifying departure corridors in the event of engine failure on takeoff. Based on MWAA coordination and technical information provided to the County, any structure at the subject site exceeding approximately 200 feet above mean sea level would appear to penetrate the protective OEI surface. Given existing site elevation, this corresponds to an approximate maximum height of 170 feet above grade for any proposed features within Memorial Circle. At a height of 250 feet above grade, the proposed Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle is estimated to exceed the OEI surface by roughly 80 feet. Such an encroachment would likely necessitate operational or procedural mitigation by the airport and its airlines and could constrain future aviation operations and land use planning in Arlington."

[Read the full letter here](#)



Image by *The Washington Post*.

White House Ballroom (East Wing Modernization)

The physical landscape of the White House complex is undergoing its most significant modifications in a generation. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) has formally approved the design and planning phases of the East Wing Modernization Project. This project includes a substantial 90,000-square-foot footprint, which features a 22,000-square-foot State Ballroom designed in a classical revival style



Photo by Carol M. Highsmith, courtesy of Library of Congress.

Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool

The National Park Service proceeded with a protective coating without compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). By bypassing standard regulatory processes for what it describes as "national aesthetics and readiness" ahead of the 250th anniversary, the administration has not scheduled any public planning hearings.

The active federal [lawsuit filed by The Cultural Landscape Foundation](#), which seeks to mitigate the adverse effects on the reflecting pool and the broader cultural

Attention has now shifted significantly to congressional oversight due to the rising \$600 million budget. This shift comes as funding transitions from private donors to federal defense and security spending, especially after recent security incidents in April. Additionally, the construction includes plans for an extensive, fortified underground military command center beneath the building.

In *National Trust for Historic Preservation v. National Park Service*, the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit affirmed US District Judge Richard Leon’s preliminary injunction blocking the Trump administration’s above-ground construction of the 90,000-square-foot White House ballroom following the demolition of the East Wing. The 2-1 decision upheld Judge Leon’s conclusion that the administration had acted beyond its legal authority, affirming Congress’s exclusive constitutional authority over federal property. The court determined that the statutes cited by the government only permit ordinary maintenance and repair rather than wholesale reconstruction, and it emphasized that 40 U.S.C. § 8106 explicitly prohibits erecting new buildings on federal grounds in the District of Columbia without "express authority" from Congress.

The administration has sought an emergency stay from the Supreme Court; the DC Circuit’s decision soundly backed Judge Leon’s legal reasoning that the executive branch cannot unilaterally fund or build such structural additions without explicit congressional authorization and appropriation.

[Read the full decision here](#)



Rendering of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building with a painted exterior.

Eisenhower Executive Office Building (EEOB)

The current administration has proposed a major "Exterior Beautification Project" to paint the historic gray granite exterior of the EEOB, which is designed in the French Second Empire style, solid white. Preservationists have strongly opposed this \$7.5 million plan, arguing that painting the granite would cause irreversible changes to both the historical significance and structural integrity of one of Washington, DC’s most distinctive landmarks. A total of 900 letters were submitted to the Commission on Fine Arts, with 100% opposing the painting. Additionally, nearly 2,000 letters were sent to the National Capital Planning

landscape of The National Mall. Additionally, upcoming congressional appropriations hearings are addressing the project’s shifting costs.

The protective coating failed, and to date, preservation groups have not been given access to the site to assess the damage to the Reflecting Pool.

Litigation is ongoing.



Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 1980.
Photo by Carol M. Highsmith, courtesy of Library of Congress.

The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

In an August 2026 meeting, the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees voted to push forward with a controversial two-year total closure of the performing arts venue for infrastructure renovations. In a direct challenge to the federal judiciary, the board also voted to add President Trump’s name to the façade to read “*The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Restored and Renovated By President Donald J. Trump*” and name the front plaza after him.

This Kennedy Center Board action will now go back to Judge Cooper for review.

The *DCPL et al.* case is still pending in US District Court and Judge Cooper has made clear that no construction activity outside of the maintenance work authorized by Congress in the "Big Beautiful Bill" may take place.

No plans exist for demolition or significant architectural alterations.

DCPL’s legal efforts on the Kennedy Center will continue over the next two years, while we ensure that the work at the Kennedy Center does not violate the judge’s order. Please consider an additional donation to the fund to help support these ongoing efforts.

Donate to the Kennedy Center Legal Advocacy Fund



The District Cup Polo Match Played in West Potomac Park, DCPL Archives, 2026.

West Potomac Park

Commission (NCPC), with all but two opposing the plan.

The lawsuit filed by Cultural Heritage Partners and the DC Preservation League is still pending and challenges the General Services Administration's authority to delegate its oversight of the management and maintenance of the EEOB to the Executive, thereby avoiding regulatory requirements.

On August 18th, the US District Court ordered that it will allow limited paint testing and warned the government against going any further with this project without Court approval. The Court also reserved decision on whether the President's management of the project is illegal.

“Presidents come and go. Our National Historic Landmarks belong to the American people,” Greg Werkheiser, Founding Partner of [Cultural Heritage Partners](#), said. “The central question in this case is whether a President can take a federal project that Congress placed in the hands of an agency subject to federal law and move that project into a White House office and place it beyond preservation review, environmental review, public participation, and ordinary judicial oversight. That issue remains actively before the Court.”

[Click here to read more about the lawsuit and the expert opposition to the proposal](#)

In June 2026, the DC Preservation League joined a coalition of advocacy, conservation, and historic preservation organizations, and an individual Washington, DC resident, to save West Potomac Park.

In the complaint, the [National Parks Conservation Association](#), DCPL, [National Mall Coalition](#), [Olmsted Network](#), the [Committee of 100 on the Federal City](#), [The Cultural Landscape Foundation](#), and resident Steve Longenecker are seeking to stop the Trump-Vance administration's unlawful attempt to remake West Potomac Park, national park land that belongs to all Americans. The coalition is represented in the matter by [Democracy Forward Foundation](#).

[Read the full press release here](#)

[Read the full complaint filed here](#)

[Read more about the East and West Potomac Parks Historic District](#)

There are no current updates on this case at this time.

Upcoming Event

Online Membership Meeting

Wednesday, August 26th | 12:00 - 1:00 pm
Virtual, Zoom Link Shared at Registration

DCPL Member Meeting!



DCPL Members are invited to join this [online meeting](#) where Executive Director Rebecca Miller will give an update on all things advocacy-related: EEOB, St. Elizabeths, the East Wing, East Potomac Park, and The Kennedy Center.

\$65 to join DCPL



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26 , 2026

12:00 - 1:00 PM | ONLINE VIA ZOOM

Upcoming Event

Hains Point Hoopla 2.0: Protect The Point

Saturday, August 29th | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
In-Person, Hains Point Mixed-Use Field



Join the [Washington Area Bicyclist Association \(WABA\)](#) and the DC Preservation League (DCPL) on Saturday, August 29th, at the Hains Point Hoopla 2.0, a community gathering in support of protecting Hains Point. The point is a popular recreation area and cultural landscape within East Potomac Park, golf course (see above Advocacy Update).

Upcoming Event

Book Launch: *Palaces of the Public*

Thursday, September 10th | 6:00 - 8:00 pm
In-Person, DC History Center, 801 K Street NW

BOOK *Launch*

Hosted by DC History Center and the DC Preservation League, this exciting event offers friends, family, and fans of John DeFerrari a special opportunity to see him in conversation with Architectural Historian Kim Prothro Williams.

Books will be available for purchase (\$34.95) and the author will sign at the end of the program!

A CULTURAL
HISTORY OF
WASHINGTON, DC's
HOTELS

Palaces of the Public

JOHN DeFERRARI



Questions? email
kelli@dcpreservation.org



September 10
6 pm - 8 pm



DC History Center
801 K Street NW

Please register by September 3.
We hope to see you there!



Join the [DC History Center](#) and the DC Preservation League (DCPL) on Thursday, September 10th, for a book launch of *Palaces of the Public* by John DeFerrari. At the event, DeFerrari and architectural historian Kim Prothro Williams will discuss the book and answer questions from the audience. Following this conversation, books will be available for purchase (\$34.95) and signing! Register below, as space is limited.

[Register Here](#)

Save the Date

Crab Feast 12

Saturday, October 3rd | 12:00 - 3:00 pm

In-Person, Washington Canoe Club, 3700 Water Street NW

CRAB FEAST 12



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

12-3PM

CAPITAL PRIDE ALLIANCE

DC PRESERVATION LEAGUE

WASHINGTON CANOE CLUB

3700 WATER ST. NW

Thank you to DCPL’s Sponsors!



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES



Anonymous • Fay Armstrong • Consigli Construction Co., Inc.
Gould Property Company • Grunley Construction Company
Frank Leone & Denise Vogt • Monarc Contruction, Inc.
Quinn Evans • SmithGroup

Connect with us on social media and make sure you never miss the latest:



© DC Preservation League

DC Preservation League | 1328 Florida Avenue NW 2nd Floor | Washington, DC 20009 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

