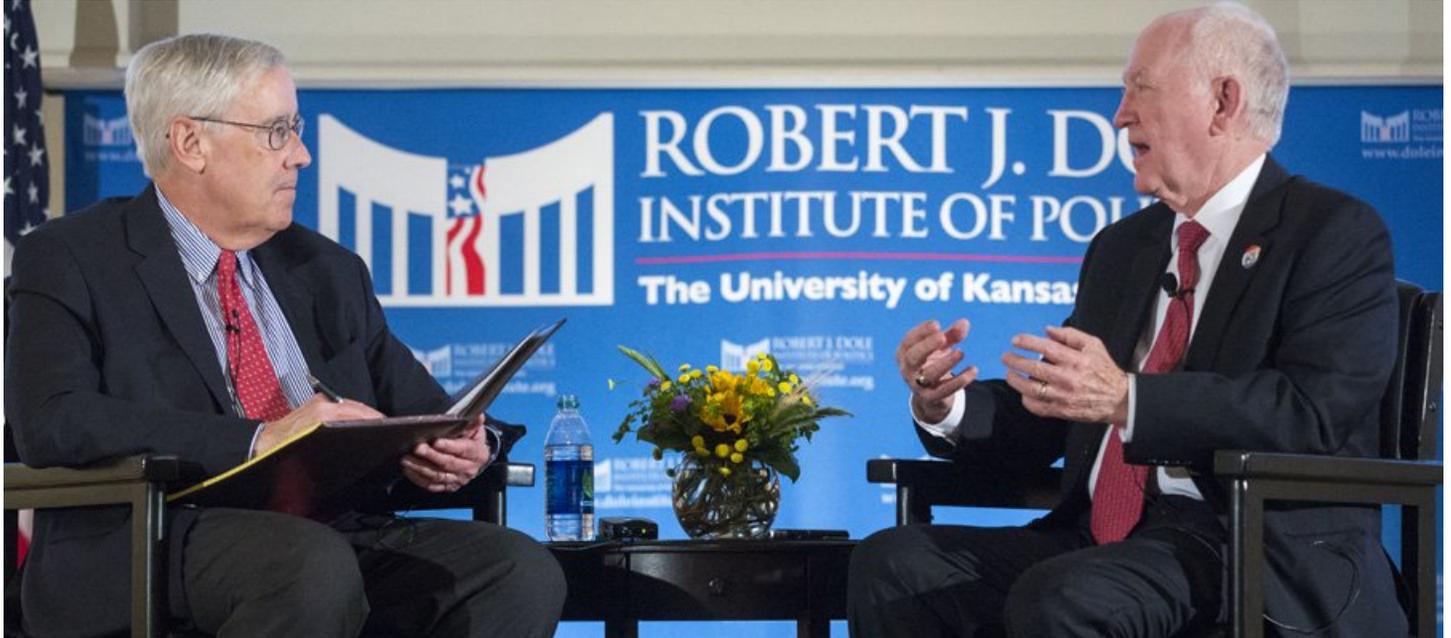


Leader of Eisenhower memorial effort discusses embattled plans in talk at Dole Institute



[John Young](#)

Dole Institute director Bill Lacy, left, interviews Retired Brig. Gen. Carl Reddel at the Dole Institute of Politics Thursday evening during one of the presentations that are part of the 2013 Dole Lecture Series. Reddel spoke about Dwight Eisenhower's legacy. [Enlarge photo](#)

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A proposed memorial to Dwight Eisenhower would bring a bit of Kansas to the nation's capital while celebrating the Abilene native's remarkable success as a general and a president, the leader of the effort said Thursday in Lawrence.

Retired Brig. Gen. Carl Reddel, executive director of the Eisenhower Memorial Commission, also acknowledged the road has been rocky at times for the embattled monument plans. But, he said, "Ike" deserves proper recognition for his achievements, and soon.

"It's about time we do this," Reddel said during the 2013 Dole Lecture at the Dole Institute of Politics on Thursday. Dole Institute Director Bill Lacy interviewed him about Eisenhower and the effort to memorialize him.

Lacy asked Reddel, who began researching Eisenhower as a specialist on Russian studies for the U.S. Air Force during the Cold War, whether his military exploits or his political career was more impressive. Reddel said he couldn't answer: Eisenhower deftly balanced security and freedom as both general and president, he said, in a way that the nation might appreciate today.

"What is most amazing to me is how these two worlds came together in a single lifetime of citizenship and public service," Reddel said.

And the proposed memorial, to be located just off the National Mall in Washington, D.C., would focus on both those legacies, he said. But it has also been the target of a [barrage of criticism](#) during the last two years, from people ranging from lawmakers to members of the Eisenhower family.

The Memorial Commission was authorized by Congress in 1999, and Reddel joined the effort in 2001. The 12-person commission, which currently contains both U.S. senators from Kansas, chose architect Frank Gehry to design the planned memorial, estimated to cost \$142 million.

Reddel on Thursday went over the plans, which call for an “urban park” near a number of federal agencies that Eisenhower helped create. A view of the U.S. Capitol would be framed by steel tapestries that he said would evoke the landscape of Kansas and by trees native to Kansas. At the center would be the actual memorial: Two 26-foot-tall stone blocks, each with a nine-foot-tall bronze statue in front, representing Eisenhower’s achievements as a general and as a president.

Also there would be a life-sized statue of a young Eisenhower, with both his destinies within his field of vision.

Along with an emphasis on both his careers, Reddell said, Eisenhower’s Kansas roots were important to the designer.

“He believes that the landscape of the heartland is a metaphor for America itself, and a big part of what Eisenhower was about,” Reddel said.

But those tapestries evoking those roots are also a sticking point between Gehry and members of the Eisenhower family who’ve called for a simpler design, Reddel said. They sent that message [at a congressional hearing](#) on the memorial in March, where they and some lawmakers called for the plans to be scrapped and for a new open design competition to begin.

“In true bipartisan spirit, almost everyone hates it,” read a [“New Yorker” article](#) following the hearing.

Lacy asked Reddel if he wished the commission had done anything different. He said he wished the group had avoided the controversy, but he wasn’t sure how that would have been done, saying the commission had consulted the Eisenhower family from the beginning.

“Having the president’s grandson and members of the Eisenhower family at 13 of our 16 commission meetings, we felt, was a sincere effort in that direction,” Reddel said.

The effort [has been delayed](#) since Eisenhower’s grandson, David, resigned from the commission in December 2011, Reddel said. He said he hoped the memorial comes to fruition soon, though he noted that the Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorial in Washington was in the works for more than 40 years.

He recalled a meeting he had with the late U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye, who had served as vice chairman of the commission, before his death. Inouye had lamented how little Americans know about the War of 1812, a turning point in the nation’s history, and said he worried that unless “Ike” was memorialized soon, he might be similarly forgotten.

Reddel said he hoped not to let that happen.

“We have to be as mindful as possible of the great and poor leadership we’ve had at different times in our history,” he said.

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