

Ay, ay, Ike

Congress should end the lengthy debate and sign off on Eisenhower's memorial.

WHEN IT comes to monuments on the Mall, controversy — writ large in marble and granite — has always been the name of the game.

The massive tributes to Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln all drew their fair share of criticism in their day; the Franklin D. Roosevelt memorial, amid squabbles over federal funding and whether the president's disability should be on full public display, took nearly 40 years to complete. Thirty years after its completion, some are undoubtedly still recovering from the oratorical firestorm over Maya Lin's memorial to Vietnam veterans. And just last week, the National Park Service finally announced its plans to remove the quote on the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial that caused such an outcry after the monument's 2011 unveiling. The politics of representation are fraught.

Nowhere has this been more true than in the case of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial, a

\$112 million project slated for four acres at the base of Capitol Hill. The 14 years since Congress authorized the memorial — to be designed by the Pritzker Prize-winning architect Frank Gehry — have featured nothing short of an epic tussle among the memorial's commission, the Eisenhower family and architectural traditionalists, both in and out of Congress, over elements of Gehry's design.

Bas reliefs in the original proposal have been removed and added again; the large metal tapestries that would frame the memorial have scandalized and delighted in equal amounts. Susan Eisenhower, Ike's granddaughter, has testified before Congress to call for a redesign, and Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) went so far as to sponsor a bill that would start the project anew, despite the millions already been spent on it.

Ironically enough, a central point of contention has been whether the humble and midwestern Ike should be depicted as a dreamy young boy from

Kansas or, as his family prefers, as a commanding general on the world-historical stage. One wonders whether that same general, who in life orchestrated the successful Allied invasion of Europe and the subsequent stability of the free world, would be up to the challenge of navigating the battle for his own commemoration. Or, for that matter, whether he'd have the patience.

In any case, the memorial's commission approved a final version of Gehry's design last month, and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts granted preliminary approval to the major contents of that design last week. Quite simply, Mr. Gehry's proposal promises to be a wonderful addition to the face of the Mall, a vision Washington is lucky to have. Moving forward, Congress should authorize these plans as quickly as possible so the memorial can proceed on schedule. As entertaining as these squabbles have often been, enough is enough already.