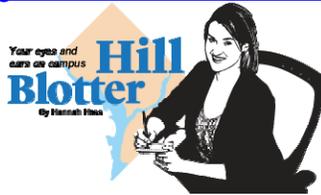


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They Like Ike in 10-1 Vote

By [Hannah Hess](#) Posted at 5 a.m. Oct. 3



Simpson still has qualms about the Gehry design. (Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call File Photo)

The National Capital Planning Commission gave preliminary design approval, 10-1, to architect Frank Gehry's latest plan for a memorial to Dwight D. Eisenhower Thursday, with a nudge toward more modifications.

While no members of Congress attended the downtown Washington meeting, Capitol Hill's influence was apparent.

Two congressional staffers voted in support of the action, on behalf of House Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Darrell Issa, R-Calif., and Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Chairman Thomas R. Carper, D-Del., reflecting a desire to [move forward](#) with the long-delayed memorial. Issa has been trying to bring disparate camps together to get the project, now 15 years in the making, back on track.

Critics, including the Eisenhower family, worry that will mean constructing a monument that falls short of Ike's legacy.

Two massive, freestanding columns that were compared to chimneys generated most of the concern about what NCPC Chairman L. Preston Bryant Jr. called a "non-traditional design." But it was found to satisfy technical principles related to how the site would mesh with the cityscape, and views along its Maryland Avenue Southwest border.

Elizabeth Ann White, an NCPC commissioner appointed by the president, said she was struggling with the columns and pitched an amendment recommending they be removed or relocated. That was rejected, and White was the lone “no” vote on the plan.

“We’re already dismantling this monument, this plan,” said D.C. Councilmember Tommy Wells, referring to Gehry’s elimination of two side tapestries in an effort to remake the design after the NCPC [rejected it](#) in April. Wells, a Democrat who represents Ward 6, said the city could end up with “a billboard and a park” if planners kept tinkering with the design.

Mina Wright, a director of the General Services Administration, agreed that the committee was “mid-slope on the slippery slope of design by committee” and urged approval.

During an hour-long public comment session, Bruce Cole, a member of the Eisenhower Memorial Commission, warned that “whatever its original merits,” Gehry’s design had been compromised. “I do not believe it serves the public space,” said Cole, a longtime opponent of the tapestries and columns Gehry envisions framing the park. Approving the design would set a precedent of “mere conformity over good design and rational planning,” he said.

Anne and Susan Eisenhower also [oppose](#) the tapestries, and a powerful House appropriator wants to make sure their wishes are respected. Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, “continues to have concerns that the views of the Eisenhower family are not being fully considered as the process moves forward” said Simpson spokesperson Nikki Wallace in an email to CQ Roll Call.

Critics cited a [harsh report](#) from the House Natural Resources Committee that slammed the project as a “Five-Star Folly,” and urged the NCPC not to proceed. Right By Ike’s Sam Roche quoted the juiciest tidbits back to the committee, hammering home his view that the process used to select Gehry was corrupt.

That report has been rejected by the EMC as inaccurate and biased. They submitted an official response to the NCPC with pages of facts and figures to refute the claims made in the congressional report.

Damning findings could be a roadblock to securing the congressional funding the EMC will eventually need to proceed to construction. Rep. Sanford D. Bishop Jr., D-Ga., could be an advocate for helping the memorial make headway. Bishop, a member of the EMC, supported the revised Gehry design with votes cast last week and a spokesperson confirmed the congressman hoped the NCPC would move forward.

“This is an important milestone for our Commission and for those who have been engaged in this project over the last decade,” said EMC Chairman Rocco Siciliano in a statement after the vote. Gehry joined him with comments thanking the NCPC “for its decision, and for its cooperative engagement in resolving the issues.”