

OPINION

THE BATTALION

At last, a fitting tribute

World War II Memorial long overdue, properly honors overlooked heroes

Saturday, Veteran's Day, ground will be broken on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for a memorial to honor the soldiers who fought and died in the World War II. Although President Clinton, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and a number of war veterans will be there, the event will not be celebrated by all World War II veterans.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

Funds have been raised from a collection of private and corporate donations, the most recent of which was a \$14 million gift from Wal-Mart, complementing the \$10 million raised by more than 300 veterans' groups across the nation. In all, according to organizers, more than 450 veterans' organizations representing more than 11 million veterans have endorsed the plan.

The members of Save Our Mall are not among the supporters. Oddly enough, the disgruntled veterans are arguing against the prominent site selected for the memorial — at the end of the Reflecting Pool opposite the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall. They say that it will disrupt the natural beauty and flow of traffic along the mall. Members are in favor of a less prominent site 125 feet to the north, placing the memorial out of the Lincoln Memorial-Washington Monument axis.

Designers of the memorial argue otherwise, noting that the memorial will be built into the ground so as not to block the

view from either of the two existing memorials.

"The reality is, if the design was not sensitive to the site, and if it didn't preserve those vistas that are so important to the mall, [it] would never have been approved by the National Commission on Fine Arts and the National Capitol Planning Commission," said American Battle Monuments Commission spokesman Mike Conley. The site has been approved five separate times by planning commissions since 1997.

Another sticking point for Save Our Mall is the design of the memorial itself. The memorial, as planned now, will consist of 56 pillars representing each state and territory of the United

States, flanking an elliptical pool with decorative fountains and an eternal flame in the center. It will also contain two large archways on either side to provide entrance access for those walking along the mall.

Critics have decided the design, comparing the memorial to monumental works created by Albert Speer, Adolf Hitler's architect.

"Where is the humanity?" asked Save Our Mall chairman Feldman.

While it is true the design does not incorporate statues of individuals in combat gear like the Korean War Memorial, the stark granite, water and eternal flame will create an atmosphere with the dignity and reverence necessary to honor the dead of World War II. The design echoes the solemn respect found in the American cemeteries on the shores of Normandy.

"The Vietnam Wall was probably one of the most roundly criticized designs when it was in development," Conley said. "Now it's one of the most cherished memorials on the mall."

Two-thirds of the 7.4-acre memorial grounds will consist of water pools and landscaping, seamlessly incorporating the memorial into the surrounding mall grounds.

Given the amount of time and effort the National Park Service and other government groups have spent examining the design to minimize impact on the mall, it is unlikely that the World War II Memorial could ever be the eyesore that Save Our Mall insists it will be.

It is impossible to satisfy every section of the population. Although critics at the time argued against the giant obelisk of the Washington Monument and the "imperial throne" of the Lincoln Memorial, both have emerged as beautiful and fitting tributes to an important part of the nation's history.

With the World War II Memorial, America has the chance to finally say "thank you" to the extraordinary efforts of millions of its countrymen in the face of war and death. It is time for Americans to stop fighting over the World War II Memorial and start remembering those it honors.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a senior political science major.

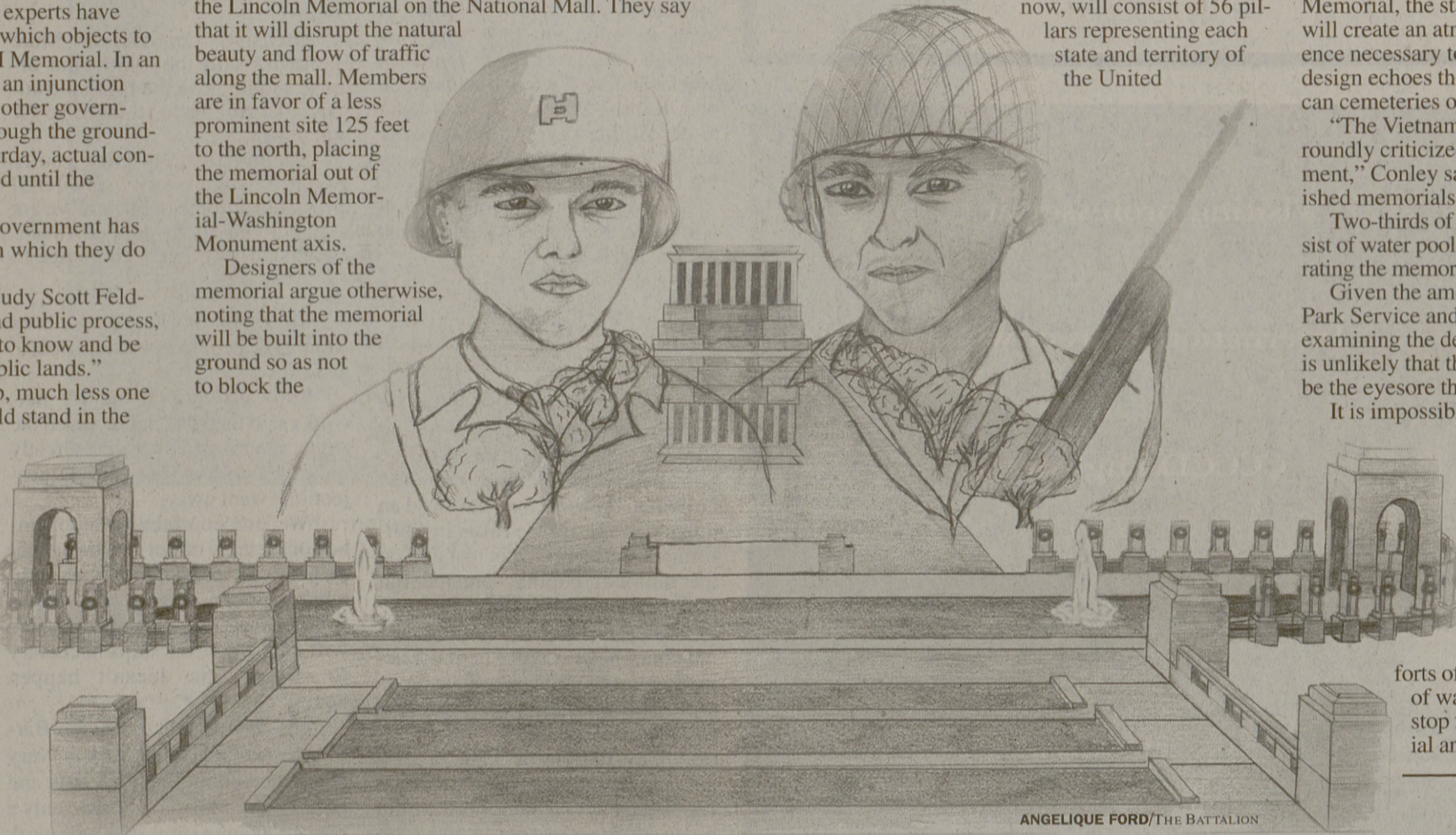
A group of veterans, architects and experts have formed a group called Save Our Mall which objects to the site and design of the World War II Memorial. In an attempt to stop the project, it has filed an injunction against the National Park Service and other government authorities in federal court. Although the ground-breaking will proceed as planned Saturday, actual construction on the project may be delayed until the lawsuit is resolved.

Save Our Mall contends that the government has broken the law by approving a design which they do not like.

"Above all," said co-chairwoman Judy Scott Feldman, "it is a subversion of the open and public process, the public's legitimate and legal right to know and be included in decisions affecting our public lands."

It is hard to imagine that any group, much less one composed primarily of veterans, would stand in the way of such a project. The truth is, most of them do not. It is time for the small but extremely vocal group that does not agree with the plan to accept that Americans have decided the World War II Memorial is a fitting tribute to the service and sacrifices made by millions of Americans more than half a century ago.

The campaign to raise funds for the World War II Memorial has been highly publicized. Supporters have included former Sen. Bob Dole, actor Tom Hanks, and a number of veteran members of Congress, including Sen. Bob Kerrey, D-Nebraska, and Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii.



ANGELIQUE FORD/THE BATTALION

Time to wake up, folks

Voter apathy hurts nation, damages democratic process

As this is written, the population of the United States has no idea who the next president will be. It also has no clue who controls the Senate, as the race in Washington between Slade Gorton and Maria Cantwell is undecided.



MARK PASSWATERS

The polls, like the nation, are split down the middle.

Who should be blamed for all of this? The answer is simple. The members of this nation's public who did not have the energy to get off of their backsides and vote have dozed their way through what will probably be the most significant election in decades. Now, because of their apathy, this country is confused and embittered.

The media is apparently excited about the idea that more than 100 million people voted in this year's election.

This sounds good, until one considers that it constitutes only 56 percent of those eligible to vote. In other words, nearly half of the nation was too apathetic to exercise a right many people around the world would kill to have.

Nearly half of the nation was too apathetic to exercise a right many people around the world would kill to have.

Congratulations, Mr. and Ms. "I cannot be bothered." Way to go, supporters of "my vote does not count anyway."

Those who feel this way have successfully placed the nation's government in a state of disarray.

In 1983, Genesis released its hit single, "Land Of Confusion." Phil Collins and company have nothing on the United States right now.

As it stands, George W. Bush will become president while losing the popular vote by less than 100,000. The Senate will, in all likelihood, be split evenly between the Republicans and Democrats.

The only part of the government that really cannot be contested is the House of Representatives, where the Republicans hold a thin but concrete majority.

Dennis Hastert is the speaker of the House and might as well be anointed the most powerful man in America for the next four years.

That is correct, ladies and gentlemen: A Drew Carey look-alike is now the baddest man in the free world.

The concept of a mandate might sound questionable to some, but it adds great weight to politicians' stances on the issues when they can point to the fact that they were found to be superior to all others by a majority of the population.

Bush cannot do that, and the makeup of the Senate further weakens his position. Hastert controls the House and suddenly finds himself in a position to control the nation's domestic agenda.

Hastert is a Republican, but there is no certainty that he will want to go along with Bush's plans for the next four years.

Yesterday, President Clinton said, "The American people have spoken. Now we must wait to see what it is they said." But did they really speak? No. Only half did. How loud would Kyle Field be if the student section and half of the Zone were filled with screaming fans?

It would not be enough to overwhelm No. 1 ranked Oklahoma, in all likelihood. Voting for the president is a citizen's ultimate test, and half the nation flunked it by not showing up.

This is especially pathetic when one considers that this nation is in a time of peace and prosperity, and the two major candidates are men who have vastly different plans for its future.

Still, people stayed home and were content to leave their fate to others.

The United States came into existence in no small part due to a lack of representation. Ask the English about this issue.

This year, 70 percent of eligible voters went to the polls in Yugoslavia and voted against Slobodan Milosevic — despite warnings from Milosevic's party and secret police that those opposing them risked death.

In 1989, 95 percent of the voters in the former Soviet Union went to the polls to vote for the Congress of People's Deputies, a totally impotent political body.

The American people are entrusted with the greatest responsibility on the planet — creating the lineup of the lone superpower's government.

In spite of this, many do not care, claiming that their votes are simply worthless.

This election proves this argument is baseless. It is the literal truth that, in many states, every single vote would have counted.

For the next four years, it is likely that members of the population will complain about how President Bush and the Republican Congress are operating.

If the reader hears people complain, ask them if they voted.

If the complainers voted, let them moan.

If they did not, do those who voted a favor and tell them to please shut up.

Their apathy has made the nation a global embarrassment.

Mark Passwaters senior electrical engineering major.

Editorial

THE BATTALION

Editorials appearing in *The Battalion* reflect the majority view of the editorial board members. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other *Battalion* staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff.

EDITORIAL BOARD

BETH MILLER
Editor in Chief

JEFF KEMPF
Managing Editor

DAVID LEE
Opinion Editor

MARIUM MOHIUDDIN
City Editor

Back to the drawing board

Chaos surrounding presidential election shows need for election reform

It seems like a simple concept — the person with the most votes wins ... right?

After the chaotic events of Tuesday evening, this question has been brushed off with a muffled "maybe."

One has to admit that today's bizarre state of affairs is a mixed blessing.

The unresolved presidential election has pointed out the kinks in the otherwise spotless armor of the American election system.

There are four key areas in the election system that need immediate reform.

First, the popular vote in presidential elections must have some, if not all, of the final say in determining the victor.

If Gov. George W. Bush is to prevail with the electoral votes of Florida and win the presidency without winning the popular vote, lingering questions may mar his administration and damage the democratic process.

If correcting this discrepancy calls for overhauling or eliminating the Electoral College for future elections, so be it.

Another possible change would be adjusting the electoral votes down to county or precinct levels, so they more accurately represents the

votes of the people of each state.

Second, ballot procedures must be standardized nationwide in order to streamline the counting process.

As reported by CNN, questions arose in West Palm Beach, Fla., over the situation of a voter intending to vote for one candidate while actually voting for someone else.

The variety of deadlines for mail-in ballots from one state to another needlessly holds up the counting process — Oregon, for example.

Third, absentee-voting procedures must be standardized.

As reported Wednesday by *The Dallas Morning News*, "The presidential election remains uncertain Wednesday partly because Florida election officials still had to count ballots from overseas military personnel."

In some areas, absentee ballots are counted first and released as early return figures. Other locations hold absentee ballots until all the other votes are counted.

The current arrangement is flawed, as it does not count absentee ballots in the same manner as regular votes.

With an estimated 25 percent of voters voting absentee this year, it would make sense if a protocol for counting absentee ballots were established.

Fourth, there must be more ac-

countability of local election officials.

A multitude of complaints have been triggered by a general carelessness and laziness on the part of many election officials.

In order for a tighter ship to be run, there must be firm sanctions in place for officials who are neglectful in their duties.

Being entrusted with the votes that decide the future of a nation is a sacred task; those who do not take this responsibility seriously should be punished.

The most sensible method of reforming these areas of the election system calls for the newly elected Congress to assemble a bipartisan commission to explore and change election laws.

Whether this means changing the electoral college, scrapping it entirely, or developing another solution, something must be done. The good of the nation depends on prompt and responsible electoral reform.

It is the obligation of the voting public to ensure that changes are made by convincing its elected representatives to bring them about.

If the public returns to its usual complacent manner, an election sometime down the future will experience the same problems as this one — or worse.



MIKE WLKOVICH ATLANTA CHRISTIANISM

The *Battalion* encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy.

Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The *Battalion* - Mail Call
014 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
1111 TAMU
College Station, Texas 77843

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (979) 845-26-
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com

Columns and letters appearing in *The Battalion* express the opinion of the authors only.

They do not necessarily reflect the opinion of other *Battalion* staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administrators, faculty or staff.