

News and stories

Capitol panel seeks input on monuments

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Hunter Field | [Arkansas Online](#)

The Arkansas Capitol Arts and Grounds Commission on Thursday approved for public comment a pair of proposals to construct and modify monuments on the state Capitol campus.

The commission first authorized preliminary plans to erect a monument to families of military members killed in the service. The monument would be placed just west of the Capitol.

The board also OK'd a proposal to add more than 600 names to the War of 1812 Memorial Fountain situated southeast of the Capitol.

The commission must give final approval to both projects after a public hearing scheduled for Oct. 11. The hearing will be held at the Arkansas Real Estate Commission, 612 S. Summit St., Little Rock.

The Gold Star Family Monument would be one of more than 40 of its kind located across the U.S., but it would be the first built on the grounds of a state capitol. Before receiving final approval, organizers must raise \$150,000 to \$200,000 to reach their fundraising goal of \$550,000.

The project, more than three years in the making, hit a snag last year after about \$90,000 in pledged state general improvement

funds were yanked in the wake of a corruption scandal that entangled several state lawmakers in unrelated projects.

Dwight Witcher, one of the monument organizers, said the group hopes to start constructing the black granite monument next spring.

It would sit on a raised platform with handrails and a pair of benches. The platform would overlook the west side of the state Capitol campus.

"It's really going to be quite attractive," Commissioner Dave Roberts said.

The War of 1812 Memorial Fountain features the names of 56 soldiers, but local chapters of the National Society United States Daughters of 1812 have identified 637 additional soldiers who served in the war and then settled in Arkansas.

The group hopes to place the names on the fountain with two zinc plaques, said Kay Tatum, chairwoman of the U.S. Daughters of 1812 Capitol Fountain Modification Committee.

The group already has funding from the national level.

"The monument was placed there in 1917," Tatum said. "They didn't have all the fancy databases like Ancestry.com and Findagrave.com like we do now to verify someone's service."

Last year, two names were added to the monument.