

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

DC PRESERVATION LEAGUE, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE JOHN
F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS, et al.,**

Defendants.

Civil Action No.1:26-cv-00981

**DECLARATION OF FRANK LEONE
IN SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

I, Frank Leone, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, declare under penalty of perjury that the following is true and correct and based on my personal knowledge:

1. My name is Frank Leone. I am over the age of eighteen and competent to make this declaration. I reside in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood of Washington, D.C.

2. I am a current member of the D.C. Preservation League (“DCPL”). I have been a member since approximately 2021. I currently serve on its Landmarks Committee, which provides information on historic sites in D.C. and reviews historic landmark applications and other historic preservation documentation. I also serve on the Organization’s Historic District Coalition, which advocates for neighborhood history, historic preservation, and historic districts in Washington, D.C.

3. I am also the Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the Foggy Bottom Association History Project (the “FBA History Project”). The FBA History Project researches, collects, and shares information about the history of the Foggy Bottom neighborhood. It also educates and advocates for preservation of the Foggy Bottom Historic District (where I live) and historic properties in the

area. The Foggy Bottom neighborhood includes the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (the “Kennedy Center”), which was built on the site of the Heurich Brewery.

4. I have longstanding personal connections to the Kennedy Center, as set forth below.

5. I have attended performances and events at the Kennedy Center periodically since the 1970s when I was growing up in Arlington, Virginia. In 2020, my wife and I moved to the Foggy Bottom Historic District neighborhood and looked forward to attending performances at the Kennedy Center. We obtained memberships at the Kennedy Center and attended the member’s lounge. Over the past five years, we visited the Kennedy Center about ten times per year (except when it was closed during COVID). We have attended theatrical performances (including *Hamilton* twice), performances by the National Symphony Orchestra (including one featuring William Shatner), Washington National Opera productions (we had season tickets for several years), free Millenium Stage events, Alvin Ailey and other dance performances, exhibitions (including “Art and Ideals: President John F. Kennedy” and local resident artist displays, including the “We Remain Here” banners recalling the displaced neighborhood.

6. We have also visited the Kennedy Center’s public spaces, including the Grand Foyer, the terrace overlooking the Potomac River which previously featured willow trees (which were removed without explanation), the Hall of States and the Hall of Nations, and the rooftop terrace (with its views of the old National Observatory) and cafeteria for personal enjoyment. We have attended outdoor events on the terraces (including the Christmas Dueling Tubas show). I also frequently walk my beagle dog in the area of the Kennedy Center and view it while eating at nearby Tazza Café or from the Georgetown Waterfront.

7. We also visited the REACH to take a tour, attend exhibits (including the 2022 Chinese Lantern festival), and enjoy beverages from the café. The Kennedy Center is not only a

performance venue – it is also a public landmark that belongs to and serves the people of my neighborhood, as well as this city this and the nation. We frequent businesses in the Kennedy Center area and frequently direct tourists and visitors to the Center. I even have a view of the Kennedy Center as the home screen on my computer.

8. The Kennedy Center holds a particular personal significance to me as a patron, nearby resident, and local history enthusiast. In my work with the FBA History Project, I have researched, written blog posts, and made a presentation to the D.C. Preservation League’s Landmarks Committee about the Kennedy Center. I also participated in a 2024 Technical Advisory Panel meeting to discuss a National Capital Planning Commission (“NCPC”) concept of neighborhood redevelopment that would include decking over the Potomac Freeway to provide better access to the Kennedy Center.

9. Originally developed during the Eisenhower administration as the National Cultural Center, the Kennedy Center became a living memorial to President John F. Kennedy, established by Congress as the sole national memorial to the late President in the city of Washington. I am aware that the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer determined in 2012 that the Kennedy Center is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The building’s historic character, including its original design, materials, and setting within the monumental core, is inseparable from the experience of visiting the site. Alterations that compromise the building’s historic integrity would diminish the very qualities that make the Kennedy Center significant to me.

10. The building’s mid-century Modernist architecture, designed by Edward Durell Stone and completed in 1971, is integral to my experience of the site. Stone is also known for the historic National Geographic building on 16th St. I value the Kennedy Center’s distinctive Italian white marble facade, its 200 exterior columns (originally finished in gold), the sweeping proportions of

the Grand Foyer, the iconic Swedish crystal chandeliers, the “box within a box” acoustical design by Cyril M. Harris, and the relationship between the building and its setting along the Potomac River. These design features are central to why I visit the Kennedy Center and are part of what makes the experience meaningful to me.

11. I have concrete plans to continue visiting and using the Kennedy Center in the future if programming continues. I recently attended an NSO concert and plan to attend again. In the past month, I saw two productions put on by the Washington National Opera – unfortunately these were at Lisner Auditorium, which does not have the capacity of its previous home at the Kennedy Center. If the Kennedy Center continues programming, I intend to renew my membership and continue to attend the types of events I mentioned above. I also will continue to walk my beagle dog in the area of the Kennedy Center and eat at Tazza Café at least once per week.

12. I have already been personally and concretely harmed by alterations that the Defendants have completed at the Kennedy Center without following legally required review procedures.

13. In or around September 2025, the Kennedy Center’s 200 exterior columns were painted from their original gold color to white. These columns are an original and character-defining feature of the building’s Modernist design, integral to the historic character that formed the basis for the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer’s 2012 determination that the Kennedy Center is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It has been noted that the gold columns resemble strings of a musical instrument, appropriate for a performing arts center. Now the columns just meld into the building in a washed out white. This change has diminished my aesthetic enjoyment of the building by changing an important element of its original design and making it look bleak and depressing.

14. The Kennedy Center Defendants installed new exterior signage placing the name “Donald J. Trump” on the facade above the name of President Kennedy. It actually reads: “The Donald J. Trump and the John F. Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts.” But the building is a *memorial* to President John F. Kennedy. This action is akin to adding President Trump’s name to the Lincoln or Jefferson memorials. It is grossly inappropriate. This alteration to the façade distracts from the buildings intended purpose – a memorial to President Kennedy, which is central to my personal experience of the site.

15. On December 18, 2025, the Board voted to rename the Kennedy Center to “The Donald J. Trump and The John F. Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts.” They are implementing this change, including adding the name to shuttle buses from Dupont Circle and the Foggy Bottom Metro station. As with the signage, this change confuses and diminishes the building’s essential character as a memorial to President Kennedy and is profoundly disturbing to me. As recognized by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, the “Kennedy Center” was an appropriate memorial for an inspiring President with a steadfast commitment to the arts. That memory is being despoiled.

16. On March 16, 2026, the Board of Trustees and its Chair, Donald J. Trump, announced that in less than four months the Kennedy Center will close completely for several years. While closed, the Kennedy Center buildings and grounds will undergo major structural work, up to and including demolition and reconstruction (the “Project”). The Kennedy Center Defendants have stated that “preliminary work has been started” and that “significant construction work” is anticipated to begin after July 7, 2026.

17. These proposed alterations would personally and concretely harm me for the reasons set forth below.

18. First, because the proposed alterations are likely to fundamentally change the historic character of the Kennedy Center in ways that would diminish my aesthetic enjoyment of the site. Specifically, the proposed changes to the building's exterior imported Italian marble façade, the interior spaces including the Grand Foyer, concert hall, and opera house and the grounds and terraces would alter the features that I have described above as central to my personal experience of the Kennedy Center. The Kennedy Center's Modernist design, its materials, its spatial qualities, and its setting along the Potomac are what make the building meaningful to me, and the proposed Project threatens to destroy or fundamentally alter those qualities.

19. Second, the announced multi-year closure of the Kennedy Center, beginning after July 7, 2026, would deprive me of access to a site that I visit regularly and that is central to my cultural life. The closure would prevent me from attending future NSO concerts and theatrical productions, would eliminate my access to the Kennedy Center's public spaces including the Grand Foyer, the terraces, the grounds, the Millennium Stage, and would disrupt a pattern of use I have maintained for five years. There is no adequate substitute for the experience of visiting the Kennedy Center. Indeed, it was built because the United States lacked a national performing arts center – it still fills that need. Closing it would deprive the performing arts community of its designated venue.

20. I am further harmed by the Defendants' failure to follow legally required procedures before proceeding with the Project and the already-completed alterations.

21. The failure to initiate and complete Section 106 consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act has deprived me and other members of the public of the opportunity to have our interests considered before irreversible changes are made to this nationally significant historic property. Had Section 106 review been initiated, I would have had the opportunity, either directly

or through the Organization, to present my concerns about the impact of the proposed alterations on my concrete interests in the Kennedy Center as described above.

22. The failure to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act means that the environmental consequences of these alterations, including impacts on the monumental core, the historic parkway, and the Potomac River waterfront, have not been adequately studied or disclosed. I would have reviewed and commented on any such analysis.

23. The failure to submit the Project to the National Capital Planning Commission for review and approval, and the failure to request advice from the Commission of Fine Arts, has deprived me and other members of the public of the opportunity to participate in the public review processes that Congress established to ensure informed decision-making about development in the national capital. I regularly follow and participate in NCPC and the Commission of Fine Arts (“CFA”) proceedings and I would have submitted comments or testimony regarding the proposed Project.

24. The failure to follow these requirements have left the community without knowledge of potential plans and the opportunity to provide comment on appropriate changes (if any).

25. To my knowledge, no public comment period or consultation opportunity has been provided in connection with the proposed Project or the already-completed alterations, despite the Kennedy Center’s eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. This failure to provide even the most basic information (*e.g.*, what were they doing with the columns) has alarmed and concerned me and my neighbors. Had such an opportunity been provided, I would have participated and submitted comments describing the concerns set forth in this declaration.

26. The harm I have described is irreparable. Once the historic fabric of the Kennedy Center is altered or destroyed, it cannot be restored to its original condition. The Kennedy Center's architectural and historic character, which forms the basis of its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, would be permanently compromised. The opportunity for meaningful public consultation will be permanently lost if the alterations proceed before the legally required reviews are completed. Monetary damages cannot compensate for the loss of the aesthetic, cultural, and historic qualities I have described. These qualities, once destroyed, cannot be recreated.

27. The proposed alterations are already underway, as the Kennedy Center Defendants have stated that "preliminary work has been started." The 200 exterior columns have already been repainted, new signage has been installed, and the Kennedy Center Defendants have announced that the building will close after July 7, 2026 for multi-year construction. I observed the painting of the columns in November of 2025, although the purpose of such painting was, and is, not clear to me.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Frank Leone

Frank Leone

Executed on 03 / 27 / 2026