



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

Letter to Governor Urging State to Halt Construction of Monument in Rockefeller Park

BRIAN KAVANAGH June 29, 2021

| ISSUE: **BATTERY PARK CITY, ROCKEFELLER PARK, COVID-19, ESSENTIAL WORKERS, PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**



On June 28, 2021, Senator Kavanagh, along with Assemblymember Deborah Glick, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, and Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou wrote to Governor Andrew Cuomo urging the State to halt construction of a monument honoring essential workers, proposed on June 23rd to be located in Battery Park City's Rockefeller Park. The legislators, who represent the area, called for further dialogue regarding the location, design, and other details about the project. The full text of the letter is below; the original can be viewed via the link above.

June 28, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As elected officials representing Lower Manhattan, we write to ask you to immediately halt the planned construction of the Circle of Heroes in Battery Park City's Rockefeller Park.

It is impossible to quantify the debt that is owed to essential workers, whose service and sacrifice are what allowed New York to persist through one of the greatest challenges the State has ever faced, and far too many of whom died or suffered serious illness. We appreciate that the State wants to create a monument to honor all that essential workers have given during the pandemic. However, we are deeply concerned that the proposed monument has been designed and placed without adequate input from frontline essential workers or the Battery Park City community— and apparently without formal consideration by the board of the Battery Park City Authority, the public entity that manages the property on behalf of all New Yorkers. We are aware that your office consulted with an “Essential Workers Monument Advisory Committee” made up largely of union heads, and we have great respect for organized labor, but we believe that a more public, open conversation is essential for a project of this scope and significance.

Throughout the pandemic, open space has been critical to the health and wellbeing of New Yorkers. Rockefeller Park contains some of the only open green space in Lower Manhattan, and it has been a vital resource for residents in the past year and a half. The Circle of Heroes would be the third monument sited in the park in as many years, each undertaken without public input despite chipping away at the sparse recreational space accessible to the community (this monument alone would require the destruction of numerous trees as well as 29,000 square feet of open green space). The announcement of the Circle of Heroes on June 23rd and the expedited construction timeline came as a shock to the community, as there had previously been only cursory mention of locating the memorial in Battery Park City, without any details regarding the scale or specific location of the project. In fact, we are only able to ask that construction be halted before it begins because of the actions of protesters that have delayed the project's groundbreaking.

We also believe that serious consideration should be given to the question of whether siting this monument here makes sense, given that Battery Park City was not one of the neighborhoods most impacted by the pandemic. Locating a monument in Rockefeller Park will render it largely inaccessible to many of the workers whom it seeks to honor, and will waste the opportunity to bring visitors and other resources to a neighborhood that more heavily bore the toll of Covid-19.

However, even if the decision is to proceed with siting the monument in Battery Park City, we believe there could be constructive conversations about the specific design and location, with the goal of mitigating the impact upon open green spaces and other essential elements of scarce parkland.

We urge you to halt construction, and undertake a transparent process with input from the community in which the monument is to be sited, as well as further discussion among frontline workers and impacted communities about what they believe would truly honor the

sacrifices they have made.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you or your staff.

Sincerely,

Jerrold Nadler

Brian Kavanagh

Deborah J. Glick

Yuh-Line Niou

cc: George J. Tsunis, Chair, Battery Park City Authority

B.J. Jones, President and Chief Executive Officer, Battery Park City Authority

Tammy Meltzer, Chair, Community Board 1