



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Ralph S. Northam  
Governor

April 16, 2019

David Stroud  
Director of Heritage Assets and Historic Preservation Officer  
Fort Monroe Authority  
20 Ingalls Road  
Fort Monroe, VA 23651

Dear Director Stroud:

I am writing today to initiate the process of removing the Jefferson Davis Arch from Fort Monroe, as well as removing references to Jefferson Davis Memorial Park. I understand that this process will require a detailed review by your office along with significant public engagement, and I believe that is appropriate. However, I feel strongly that a memorial glorifying the President of the Confederacy has no place here, especially given our efforts this year to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of enslaved Africans landing at Old Point Comfort.

As you know, Fort Monroe will play a central role in the 400<sup>th</sup> commemoration, culminating in a series of events this August. It is critical that the issue of the Jefferson Davis Arch and park is addressed before those events. These symbols are incompatible with the message and understanding we must convey at Fort Monroe this year.

Furthermore, while the arch and park are mentioned in the existing and proposed updated Fort Monroe National Historic Landmark designation documents, they are not listed as contributing features. As the designation documents make clear, the arch and park were constructed after the landmark's period of historical significance ended. Far from being original or essential features of the 19<sup>th</sup> century fort and its military history through World War II, the park was instead dedicated to Davis in 1955 and the arch was erected in 1956 – the same year that Virginia shamefully established the policy of massive resistance to school integration.

While it is appropriate to discuss and interpret Jefferson Davis' imprisonment at Fort Monroe, it is not appropriate to glorify it. To use the parlance of the National Historic

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Preservation Act, the continued presence of the arch – along with the dedication of the park to Davis – has an adverse effect on this historic property.

Thank you for your consideration of my request, and for your service to the Commonwealth. My staff will be in touch with you in the coming days to discuss moving toward a swift resolution of this issue using the process established under the November 2011 Memorandum of Understanding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph S. Northam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ralph S. Northam

Cc: James P. Moran, Chair, Board of Trustees, Fort Monroe Authority  
Glenn Oder, Executive Director, Fort Monroe Authority