

**Statement of Support for Locating the new Columbia Library to the Lakefront
near the**

**Howard County Monument for Veterans and Military Families, and
a Proposal to include a combined Veterans Services Organization Visitor
Welcome Center and Museum immediately adjacent to the library**

By George Delaney
Commander,
Columbia American Legion Post 300

I hereby submit this Statement of Support to relocate the Downtown Columbia Library in or near the Millie Bailey Park and the Howard County Monument for Veterans and Military Families.

I also respectfully request including adequate space adjacent to the new Library for a Monument Welcome Center and Museum with approximately 800 square feet for the Veterans Services Organizations (VSO's) of Howard County. These are the American Legion Columbia Post 300; American Legion Ellicott City, Adams, Hanna, Moore Memorial Post 156; Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Yingling-Ridgely Post 7472; the SSgt Karl G. Taylor, Sr. Detachment 1084 of the Marine Corps League (MCL); and the Howard Composite Squadron MD-308 of the Maryland Wing, Civil Air Patrol.

Context:

As the senior member of the American Legion in Howard County, I interact almost daily with the Commanders of these organizations throughout the year for planning and at public ceremonies, Veterans Funerals, Monument dedications, visits to isolated Veterans in private homes and Assisted Living and Nursing homes, and decoration of Veterans graves in cemeteries. All VSO's work closely together as a force multiplier to support Veterans, Active Military and Reserves, the National Guard, and Families. As a member of the Department of Maryland Executive Committee of the American Legion, I assist and advise the State Commander and other senior officers of Howard County activities and how we support our National Mission of Serving and Saving Veterans here. Achieving this mission and the missions of all VSOs in Howard County demands close

cooperation, mutual respect, detailed planning and active participation of hundreds of volunteers.

We are heavily supported in our missions by Howard County's Office of Veterans and Military Families under the expert leadership of Lisa Terry, the Howard County Veterans Commission, and the Howard County Veterans Foundation. It is my high honor to make this proposal on behalf of such a great support system in Howard County and the thousands of citizens who support, contribute to, and join in so many activities. My goal if this proposal is adopted is to increase the cohesion and unity among us all to deliver the best positive impact with our services for the residents of Howard County. We are in the final analysis all in this together.

VISION

VSO presence will enhance both residents and visitor experiences:

The Howard County Monument for Veterans and Military Families is the only such monument in the Mid Atlantic Region devoted to both Veterans and Families. When troops are deployed, families also serve. In the past twenty years, the Post 9-11 conflicts in so many diverse places have doubled and tripled the pace of deployments and has placed enormous stress on Military Families. It is not unusual for a Reservist to deploy 2 and 3 times in a single year. The Families left behind must deal with the separation and take care of children and make life as normal as possible. This monument respects and honors those families, not to mention those from earlier wars. It is inevitable that this monument will in fact become a regional magnet, bringing solace to many, a place to reflect and mourn, and also to celebrate our heroes. A side benefit will be increased tourism and economic benefit to local small and medium sized businesses.

VSO presence at the library will be a focal point to honor our Veterans Services Organizations:

The relocation of the new library to a convenient space near the monument can serve as an enrichment to their visit. We can create an environment that extends the history of service of Veterans even after they served in the armed forces, but as Veterans serving again in the Veterans Services Organizations. Currently, only

one of our VSOs has a Post Home (VFW) to display trophies and awards, historical charters, Post flags, historical documents and photos through the years. Most of us have these treasures stacked in boxes in garages and basements, with no place to display them and publicly honor our service. Howard County has had more than its share of amazing heroes among us, some already passed to what we call "Post Everlasting", and many more still with us, serving and mentoring our younger generations.

Library presence will help to improve VSO Public Image in Neighborhoods:

Some of our VSO services are not well known, and we are trying to improve our collective image in the neighborhoods and nooks and crannies throughout Howard County. We bring veterans services on a rotating basis with Outreach Days but it limits us to two annual visits at a particular location. We are swamped with Veterans on those days but we are just scratching the surface of the real need. Many of our contacts lead to referrals to the extensive Howard County Veteran Support staffs. There are 20,000 Veterans living in Howard County!

VSOs at the Library will help to educate and inform Children and Youth:

Teachers could schedule follow-on field trips for younger schoolchildren after our school visits on Veterans Day week and Memorial Day week. One of our core principles (Pillars of Service) is to serve Children and Youth. We offer access to numerous scholarships and leadership development programs. We teach Americanism and Patriotism in the schools and what these holidays mean to Veterans. I will be speaking and answering children's questions on Veterans Day at my neighborhood Thunder Hill Elementary School, Grades K through 4 from 8 a.m. until 10 a.m. and later for our senior citizens at Encore Assisted Living Home at Turf Valley. Our service visit team will personally deliver Honor Certificates, lapel pins and mini-flags to over thirty wheel -chair bound Veterans. This is what VSO's do and it is our honor and commitment. Post 300 has thirteen member-led service teams to call and visit veterans and schedule and staff our various programs. Other VSO's have similar visits and events: these are just cited as examples.

VSO's desperately need a place to publicly display their achievements:

If VSO's can be granted the requested space in the new library, we will have ample wall space to display the history of our Veterans, with every VSO represented. A place to bring our families to teach history and the reason for National Defense and how Liberty is preserved and Defended at a very high price. We need a place to dust off the awards our generations worked so hard to earn, only to be forgotten in dust covered storage boxes in dark basements, damp storage sheds and garages. Surely, we can do better!

What would the VSO Welcome Center and Museum look like and what are our requirements?

I see a facility with photos of our comrades, our service and organization flags, and History books which we author every year available for residents and families to view in a comfortable setting with some relaxing chairs. A front counter with three positions will help us serve our visitors professionally. We will need internet access and computers and printers. We need to display a complete assortment of Veterans Benefits brochures, from the VA, DVMF, VetCenters, and the many Howard County services for Caregiving, Recreation, mental health options, and so on. We need about six feet of card racks. Even local Veterans can visit at their leisure to avail themselves of this service. It goes hand in hand with a visit to the library. We will also need a small conference table ideally seating 10 persons for group presentations to visitors. We will need a slide projector and screen, microphone and amplifier to offer afternoon educational presentations. We all have professional Post officers who will volunteer to help as they choose and represent their own organizations. Some visitors will likely take advantage of the opportunity to serve again and join our Posts. This will help keep us vibrant and hopefully attract some younger members. I did not attempt to address budgetary concerns at this time but as you can see they are formidable.

Possible Visitor Welcome Amenities:

We would like to offer complimentary coffee and cold refreshments. We can fund this with donations. I don't know how this would be viewed by the committee and if there are any code or sanitary requirements we would need to meet. We don't want to burden the construction plan with undue costs or complications, so we

would benefit if your design team could guide us in our layout development. We also do not want to hurt any local restaurants but we are talking about only complimentary beverages. We would prefer our own entrance so as not to disrupt the library operation. The library staff can comment if they think this is advisable or not.

Staffing:

I am so committed to this idea that I volunteer to staff it each day almost full time with other Veterans helping. We need to decide if weekends are the best times so we welcome opinions on this. Some of us will act as docents and show visitors around and welcoming them. I will of course not take any salary as it is my honor to do this. I am also the Columbia Post 300 Historian and Photographer and custodian of 23 years of awards, photos and records. I am confident we can staff the operation because we are highly motivated.

Summary:

Thank you for offering me the opportunity to present this proposal via email.

Unfortunately, I will be in Indianapolis as one of Maryland's two students at the Annual National American Legion College (NALC) at the same time as your scheduled meeting. I will have limited access to reading and answering emails as this is a very intensive day and night class, almost like an adult boot camp. However, the best way to reach me would be to email me at delprops9@gmail.com and I will try to answer as soon as possible. I will be at the NALC from Saturday, November 15 returning Friday, November 21, 2025. I look forward to meeting with all involved at a mutually convenient later date where we can collaborate and refine the concept. I welcome your participation. Thank you all for taking the time to read my endorsement of the library relocation near to the Veterans and Families monument, and my thoughts on operating a combined VSO Center immediately adjacent to the library. Bear in mind due to the urgency of getting this proposal done quickly, I did not have time to coordinate with the Commanders of the other VSOs, so I hope that I did them justice in representing a group proposal to get the ball rolling. Thank you all.

Respectfully, and in Service,

George Delaney

Commander, Columbia Post 300, the American Legion of Maryland