

## The monumental controversy

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**Lexington Park, MD** – The large concrete and marble structure can't be missed by motorists traveling on Route 450 and Route 1 in Prince George's County. There's almost no one still alive who remembers Bladensburg without the Peace Cross. The monument went up in 1925, as a way to remember over 40 county men who went off to fight in the Great World War and never returned. The monument, which is shaped like a cross used to mark a grave in so many post-World War I cemeteries in Europe, was also envisioned as a way to bring comfort to grief-stricken families.

There does not appear to be—although there very well could be—credible documentation as to whether anyone objected to the monument plan, implementation, project completion and dedication during the mid-1920s. There is, however, an abundance of information of the controversy that has raged for the past several years. In a nutshell, the American Humanist Association (AHA) claims the monument violates the U.S. Constitution's Establishment Clause (what many refer to as "separation of church and state") citing as evidence the fact that it is owned and maintained by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and is prominently displayed on public property.

According to an online synopsis, the AHA is an "advocate for progressive values and equality for humanists, atheists, agnostics and freethinkers." Their problem with the monument is its shape. The cross is considered a symbol of Christianity and thus the monument lacks "a secular purpose."

While advocacy is a noble thing, you have to wonder if demanding and seriously litigating to force the removal of an historical structure that was built amid absolutely no protest, for meritorious purposes—purposes that transcend mere religious ritual—is in the best interests of humankind. Keep in mind humans—Christians, non-Christians, atheists and agnostics—who normally travel Route 1 and Route 450 to get home, visit family and friends, go to work and patronize businesses in the vicinity will be tremendously inconvenienced if a demolition project is ordered by the courts. And who pays for that project? Will the AHA ramp up their advocacy into fiscal responsibility and happily foot the bill with the same enthusiasm with which they are paying their Constitutionally savvy attorneys?

I'm sure everyone has their own opinion as to why the AHA is trying so ardently to topple this landmark. It seems to me they are doing it because they can. All that bravado may seem pragmatic and proper to the Humanists. Its kind of oxymoronic to apply the word "human" to this campaign to remove a monument that honors soldiers who lost their lives. It seems rather inhumane to me.

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