

NATIONAL

A judge halted the removal of a Confederate memorial at Arlington National Cemetery

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The removal of the Confederate Memorial in Section 16 of Arlington National Cemetery, in Arlington, Va., is on hold after a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order. U.S. Army photo by Elizabeth Frasier/Arlington National Cemetery

A federal judge on Monday issued a temporary injunction to stop the removal of a monument to Confederate soldiers on the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery.

Workers had begun to remove the memorial on Monday before U.S. District Judge Rossie Alston Jr. issued his order, saying that the plaintiff's lawyer represented to the court that the project involved the disturbance of gravesites.

A group called Defend Arlington, affiliated with a group called Save Southern Heritage Florida, filed suit Sunday in federal court in Alexandria, Va. Alston set a hearing for Wednesday.

The removal, which was scheduled to be completed by the end of the week, comes in response to legislation passed by Congress, and amidst efforts in recent years to take down symbols honoring slaveholders and Confederate leaders.

In 2021, Congress passed a law requiring the Department of Defense to look at removing "names, symbols, displays, monuments, or paraphernalia" commemorating the Confederacy.

Arlington's Confederate Memorial offers a "mythologized vision of the Confederacy, including highly sanitized depictions of slavery," according to a report prepared by a commission set up in response to that legislation. The report notes that an inscription promotes the "Lost Cause" myth, "which romanticized the pre-Civil War South and denied the horrors of slavery."

RACE Confederate monument melted down to create new, more inclusive public art

The monument, designed by sculptor Moses Ezekiel, was erected in 1914 with congressional approval at the cemetery located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.

University of Maryland historian Leslie Rowland told NPR and WBUR's *Here and Now* that funds for the memorial were raised by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which existed largely to "vindicate Confederate soldiers and other members of the Confederate generation." They did so by "putting forward a sanitized, romanticized version of the pre-Civil War South," Rowland said.

Arlington National Cemetery had said that bronze pieces of the memorial would be removed, and its granite base would be left in place "to avoid disturbing surrounding graves." According to a press release issued before the court's order, the removal was to be finished by Dec. 22.

The plan to take down the monument has received pushback from some Republican leaders, including more than 40 members of Congress who've called for halting the removal. *The Washington Post* reported in September that Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin has asked the Virginia Military Institute to display the statue at a Civil War museum it operates.

confederate soldiers glenn youngkin virginia military institute confederate monument university of maryland arlington national cemetery civil war

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