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U.S. General Services Administration

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Comments from the initial public comment period ending December 31, 2005 have been reviewed and are summarized below.

A total of 359 comments were received by the General Services Administration in response to the request for public comments on the six New Deal Era murals that have been identified as inappropriate for their depictions of Native Americans by a number of EPA employees and representatives of Native American organizations. The murals are:

Dangers of the Mail	Frank Mechau
Pony Express	Frank Mechau
Opening of the Southwest	Ward Lockwood
Consolidation of the West	Ward Lockwood
French Explorers and Indians	Karl Free
Covered Wagon Attacked by Indians	William Palmer

GSA would like to take this opportunity to thank those that submitted comments. It is essential that GSA hear the opinions of the public in order to have a meaningful consultation as required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. While opinions varied significantly, it was obvious that the majority of individuals felt strongly as to how the murals should be treated. The following characterizations of the murals are a composite of received comments and are not the opinions of GSA.

The comments tended to fall into two categories, the first category of respondents favored retaining the murals for their “artistic and historic significance” and the second category of respondents favored the removal

of the murals because of the “inappropriate depiction of Native Americans and for the hostile work environment created by the nudity and violence” depicted in a number of the murals.

For those recommending that the murals be retained, a majority went on to recommend that information be provided in the various lobbies where the murals are located to describe the art work, the artist and the circumstances under which the murals were commissioned. A minority of those in favor of retaining the murals advocated no further action be taken other than to remove the temporary screens that have been erected in front of three of the six murals.

For those recommending that the murals be removed, a majority recommended that they be “relocated to a museum where they could be properly interpreted and purposely viewed, as compared to the current situation where little or no information is provided and the average employee and visitor are exposed to the murals by virtue of where their office is located or how they travel through the building.” A minority of comments recommended removal without provisions for future display. A number of comments also recommended that the murals be retained in place, but be covered for viewing upon request. In addition to the recommendations for removal, a small number of comments suggested that new art work be commissioned that would depict the mission of the Environmental Protection Agency or create positive images of Native Americans.

The reviewer was impressed with the number of comments received where the commentators consistently took the opportunity to acknowledge the legitimacy of an opposing position.

It is not the intention of GSA to provide a count of various opinions and positions received as part of this initial public comment period. A decision or action will not be based on a majority opinion. Again, we would like to thank everyone for providing your comments and participating in this public process.

Next Steps:1. As a next step in the process of considering the treatment of the murals, GSA will install a series of information text panels to provide

information on the complete collection of murals throughout the Ariel Rios building. As part of this interim display, a museum quality panel will be installed at the mural Dangers of the Mail, by Frank Mechau, to test the effectiveness of the panels for screening the mural from the general public while providing an appropriate level of light and space for those wishing to view the mural. A mock-up of the text panel will be provided in the near future.

2. GSA will conduct a forum where experts on Native American Concerns, the Arts and other related disciplines will be invited to participate in a discussion on the display of the Ariel Rios murals. We hope to hold this forum in the late summer or fall of 2006. The text of the discussion would then be posted on the web site to facilitate a second comment period.