

February 5, 2015

Kansas House Transportation Committee

Testimony in Support of HB 2103

Clay County Vietnam Veterans Bridge

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an endorsement to HB 2103.

As a Vietnam era veteran, I can attest to the fact that we are starting to dwindle in numbers, even at possibly a greater and quicker rate than members of WWII. The after effects of Agent Orange, the mental anguish and other wounds that many of my peers endured are becoming more apparent in each passing year.

As I watch and listen to many that have been affected by the participation during those years, I feel very fortunate that I was able to avoid those problems and have had a healthy and good life with no major military related problems. My civilian government career and 36 years of a military career are some of my proudest achievements.

When I was made aware of the House Bill before this group, I was reminded of those days many years ago. Some of my close friends, that made it home, show the scars from those days and still they try to go from day to day attempting to do the right things the best they can.

When returning home from performing their duty and were swore at, spit on and called names they still continued to stand proud and represented the United States Military (and government) in a very professional manner. They continue to maintain that professional standard in their daily lives. I sometimes question how a soldier today would react to such treatment?

A few months when ago a fellow Clay County resident and Veteran of the Vietnam conflict approached the former District 64 Representative about a way to remember and honor Clay County residents who

served their country during the Vietnam conflict, it awakened some of those memories in myself, and I am sure many others that had put away and tried to forget.

Noted in earlier conversations and documents, it was determined that the Republican River bridge south of Clay Center would be an appropriate designation to honor those that served in a gallant manner. Thus, House Bill 2103, that is before you today.

This bridge on Highway 15 is a major route for north and south traffic both commercially and private. This designation as a way to honor Vietnam Veterans will be seen by many travelers through our area on a daily basis as well as the residents of Clay County.

There are a number of retired military in Clay County, some who have returned to the area and some who have retired from nearby Fort Riley. Many of those retirees are Vietnam Veterans who would be greatly honored by the signs which will be placed on the highway on either side of the bridge.

I thank you for the opportunity to address and participate with you today and ask for your positive consideration of HB 2103.

LTC William H. Zacharias, Retired
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