

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Gary Hayzlett at 1:30 P.M. on March 1, 2007 in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Mark Treaster- excused

Committee staff present:

Hank Avila, Kansas Legislative Research

Bruce Kinzie, Revisor of Statutes Office

Betty Boaz, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Senator Dennis Pyle

Others attending:

See attached list.

The Chairman called the meeting to order and opened the hearings on **SB 108**.

**SB 108 - Designating part of U.S. highway 73 as the Deputy Todd Widman memorial highway**

Chairman Hayzlett recognized Senator Pyle as the first proponent of this bill. According to Senator Pyle (Attachment #1) Deputy Todd Widman lost his life in the line of duty. Senator Pyle attached a newspaper article to his testimony to explain in more detail about the slain deputy.

Sheriff Lamar Shoemaker, Brown County Sheriff's Dept. was scheduled to testify in support of **SB 108** but due to weather conditions in his area he needed to stay there and take care of problems. His testimony was passed out to the Committee as well as the written testimony of William R. Nonnast, Hiawatha, KS.

There were no other proponents and no opponents so Chairman Hayzlett closed the hearing on **SB 108**.

Because there was no opposition to this bill, it was the Chairman's desire to work **SB 108**.

Representative Peck made a motion to favorably pass SB 108 out of Committee and place it on the Consent Calendar. The motion was seconded by Representative King and the motion carried.

Chairman Hayzlett drew the Committee's attention to Minutes of Committee meetings on February 14, 15, 19 and 20, 2007, and asked the Committee to review. Representative Huntington made a motion to approve the Minutes, seconded by Representative Humerickhouse and the motion carried.

There being no further business before the Committee, the Chairman adjourned the meeting. The next meeting will be on March 6, 2007, at 1:30 p.m. in Room 519-S.

**HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE** 3-1-07

<b>NAME</b>	<b>REPRESENTING</b>
ROBYN HORTON	AG MOTOR CARRIERS ASSOC.
TOM WHITAKER	" "
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STATE OF KANSAS  
SENATE CHAMBER



COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS  
MEMBER: ELECTIONS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
UTILITIES  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL CLAIMS  
AGAINST THE STATE

## Senator Dennis Pyle

January 25, 2007

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify concerning SB 108. This bill passed the Senate 38 to 0.

As you can see, this bill designates a portion of U.S. Highway 73 as the Deputy Todd Widman memorial highway, as requested by several constituents and members of Todd's family. For those of you who may not be familiar with Todd's story, an article is attached that gives many of the details regarding the events surrounding his death.

Again, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of SB 108. Due to the nature of this bill, I humbly request the committee consider placing this bill on the Consent Calendar. I will be happy to stand for any questions. Thank you.

House Transportation  
Date: 3-1-07  
Attachment # 1

Paper: Wichita Eagle, The (KS)

Title: SLAIN DEPUTY 'WAS THERE TO HELP' HUNDREDS OF POLICE OFFICERS AND TOWNSPEOPLE TURN OUT TO HONOR A MAN WHO LOST HIS LIFE WHILE REACHING OUT TO A RUNAWAY

Date: March 5, 2000

HIAWATHA - A violent death does not knock easily on the doors of this small northeast Kansas town.

The fatal shooting of Todd Michael Widman, a 21-year-old part-time Brown County Sheriff's deputy, was a first in many ways for Hiawatha, population 3,600.

The community can't remember a law enforcement officer ever being killed in the line of duty. And for members of Widman's 1997 Hiawatha High School class - two-thirds of which came home to attend his funeral Saturday - the deputy's death marked the first of someone close to them.

No one will ever know what happened between the two young men whose paths crossed in that white Chevrolet Caprice sheriff's car last Wednesday. But people who knew Widman say they have no doubt he died trying to help Vincent Smith, a 16-year-old runaway. Smith later was shot and killed after he shot at officers searching for him.

On Saturday, as hundreds of mourners packed the Hiawatha High School auditorium - the only venue big enough for the funeral - businesses used marquees usually reserved for touting ice cream and oil change specials to remember Widman.

"Let him live forever in your heart."

"Todd's family: You're in our prayers."

"We salute Todd Widman."

Widman's death is even more tragic, his colleagues and friends say, because it came at the hands of a boy who grew up in a law enforcement family.

Smith's father, Lt. Thomas Smith, is a 29-year-veteran of the police department in Buffalo, N.Y. In a handwritten letter, Smith said the boy who pulled the trigger on a handgun taken from home was not the same boy he raised.

Widman was on his way to becoming the type of law enforcement officer who would have been a role model for people Smith's age, say Hiawatha community leaders.

He split his time between attending classes at Washburn University in Topeka and working at the sheriff's department as a jailer and serving papers. Each focused on his dream of a career in law enforcement.

"He actually lived for that," said Jim Reigle, who runs a private ambulance service and responded to the shooting. A cross decorated with flowers and teddy bears marks the spot where Widman died.

A role model

Early Wednesday evening, Widman responded to a report of a teen walking along U.S. 73 north of Hiawatha. He radioed in at 6:53 p.m. to say he had found the boy.

Brown County Attorney Kevin Hill said he can't believe Widman would have done anything to agitate Smith, who took off from Buffalo in his mother's 1988 Ford Tempo, ditched it northwest Missouri along I-29 and hitchhiked his way toward Hiawatha.

"I think Todd was there to help this kid," Hill said.

John Severin, superintendent of the school district Widman attended from kindergarten through 12th grade, agreed.

"I really see Todd being a big benefit to kids getting into trouble with the law," Severin said.

Although he was a rookie deputy, the youth of Hiawatha already looked up to Widman, who helped the high school football and American Legion baseball teams take second in the state.

Youngsters view athletes as role models, teacher John Barrett noted, and Widman was a good-looking, popular guy in high school.

"They looked up to him as a 'cool' guy," Hill said. "It says a lot he wanted to come back here. He would have been good with the youth."

Hi. .d Widman "the best student I ever had" and said he made the highest grade in one of Highland Community College's toughest classes, a criminal law and procedure course.

Sheriff Lamar Shoemaker, whose officers wore black bands on their badges to honor Widman, said Widman was an eager student of law enforcement. He participated in a ride-along program and was "always wanting to learn."

#### Farewell to a colleague

Hundreds of law enforcement officers attended Widman's funeral. Traveling from across Kansas and from Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa and even from Buffalo, they saluted Widman at his graveside. They filled the stage at the high school auditorium and spilled over into the aisles, many of them forced to stand during the service because there was no room for them to sit.

Widman was buried underneath a bright blue tent on a warm day with clear skies and a gentle Kansas breeze. Mount Hope Cemetery was surrounded by fields, the type in which Widman liked to hunt and drive golf balls.

The Rev. Rick Souter said family members remember Widman teeing off the porch of his boyhood home, sending golf balls into the hayfield. He'd pay cousins to grab up the balls before his stepfather needed to plow.

"He loved the outdoor sports," said Nathan Zeit, a classmate now attending Kansas State University who joined other members of his class at the funeral and at the cemetery.

#### Honoring a classmate

No one in particular organized the effort to come back home to attend the funeral, Zeit said. His classmates just knew it was the right thing to do.

"He was a good kid," said Christy Conrad, now attending Western Illinois University in Peoria.

Conrad said many members of the class of about 90 were struggling with the first death of someone close.

"I think that's why it's so hard," she said as other members of her class hugged each other and wiped away tears.

Known for being easygoing, Widman also was a hard worker, friends say.

He worked part-time jobs at the sheriff's office as a jailer and serving papers and also filled up people's cars at Kloepper Texaco. Severin was hoping Widman would continue to work as part of the district's summer maintenance crews, a job he'd done the past three years.

"Todd's was the first name that came up" when Severin asked around about who he should rehire this summer.

Widman hadn't narrowed down his summer plans yet, but he told his grandparents he needed to make a certain amount of money this summer to help pay for school and hoped he'd get at least 30 hours a week at the sheriff's department.

In the coming days and weeks, officials will try to sort out what made Smith run away and shoot Widman.

"Why he was here may be a question no one can answer," Shoemaker said. "I don't know what Todd's state of mind was that night. There's only one person who can answer that, and he's not here."

The deaths of Widman and Smith will forever be entangled. Their stories started with a call to emergency dispatchers and ended with one, too: "728, I've been shot."

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#### PHOTO

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