

ORAL PROPONENT testimony for SB 431 Directing the Capitol Preservation Committee to approve plans for a memorial honoring Emil Joseph Kapaun.

To: State Representative Ron Ellis, Chairman, Kansas House Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs

From: Michael J. Grothoff State Deputy of the Kansas State Council of the Knights of Columbus

Date: March 5, 2024

Chairman Ellis and members of the Kansas House Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs



My name is Mike Grothoff. As State Deputy, I am the leader of the Knights of Columbus here in Kansas. Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of our membership in favor of SB 431.

The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic Fraternal Service Organization inspired by our four principles of Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism. I am proud to represent over 38,600 Knights and their families in 280 local councils across the Sunflower State. We have three chapters in Kansas named in Chaplain Kapaun's honor, including one in his hometown of Pilsen.

On behalf of the Kansas Knights, I enthusiastically support SB 431. We believe that adding a memorial of Chaplain Father Emil Kapaun to our statehouse demonstrates our commitment to the values that this humble servant embodied.

We stand ready to increase awareness of this initiative among our membership through our social media and statewide organizational mailings, and to aid in the raising of funds for the project. The Kansas Knights have a strong track record of charitable giving.

- Through its annual Tootsie Roll Campaign, the Kansas Knights of Columbus has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years in support of the Kansas Special Olympics and persons with intellectual disabilities.
- Since its inception, our Emergency Disaster Aid Program has raised over \$1.3M to aid families that have lost their homes to natural disasters such as fires, floods, and tornadoes.
- We annually participate in the Knights' signature *Coats for Kids* program, which distributes much-needed winter coats to underprivileged children in our communities. Through *Coats for Kids*, which is synonymous with our mission of charity, Knights of Columbus councils have distributed over 10,000 coats to underprivileged children in Kansas.
- The Knights of Columbus also partners with the Archdiocese of Military Services to help provide funds to educate the future generations of much-needed Catholic chaplains in our Armed Forces. Since its inception more than a decade ago, the Knights' Military

Chaplains Scholarship Program has supported more than 70 military chaplains, and we currently have 40 seminarians studying for the priesthood, in the footsteps of Father Kapaun. Kansas Knights have contributed \$90,000 to this program — triple the initial target.

These are just a few of the charitable programs Kansas Knights support, and we will get behind this project to honor Father Kapaun with all we've got. Our members have a special affection for Chaplain Kapaun, and our over 38,600 Knights across the state will embrace this project and work toward its success.

I urge you to pass SB 431, recognizing the impact Chaplain Father Emil Kapaun has had on both our great state of Kansas and our nation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer this testimony. Thank you for your consideration.

Michael J. Grothoff
State Deputy
14224 W 141st Terr
Olathe, Kansas 66062
Mgrothoff2@gmail.com