

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, Kansas Veterans, and POW/MIA Family Members,

Thank you for allowing me to testify and request approval for HB2105.

My name is Glenn Nelson Jr., a Military Retiree with over 24 years of service with the Army National Guard and Active Army, a Disabled Veteran, and a Lifetime member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans group.

As Wakefield Kansas VFW Post 7774 POW/MIA Chairman, my research and study regarding POW/MIA is ongoing. I have listened to some MIA family members in person to learn what they experienced. After all this, I'm not an Expert and I cannot fully understand what it was like to be a POW/MIA Family member. I am, however, an advocate who believes in remembering and honoring what they went through as Missing in Action, as well as the physical and mental abuse, even torture endured by POW's themselves, and the hardships of the families.

I am quite sure this committee is aware that Kansas has extensive Memorial Highways for almost every war in our history. In addition, numerous individuals including some Veterans, Veterans Groups, and Gold Star, Purple Heart, Medal of Honor, Troopers, and elected officials have designated Highways and Bridges. I was very surprised when I learned Kansas does not have a Highway or Bridge designated for ALL Kansas POW/MIA and decided to do something about it. Many other States already have POW/MIA Memorial Highways, Bridges, Parkways, or Interchanges. Oregon, Idaho, California, Washington, Colorado, Oklahoma, Michigan, Florida, Maryland, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and New York to name a few.

There are many categories of POW/MIA. In some cases, the servicemember was likely killed but could not be recovered or identified from the chaos of war. In other cases, they were likely captured but were not sent home after the war with Other Prisoners of War. Kansas Issues Ex. POW License Plates. KDOT informed me only 14 Ex. POW's now have those plates.

I'm only going to share 4 stories from POW/MIA associated with Wakefield Ks.

When I joined the VFW I met a WWII Veteran from Wakefield, Ks. TSGT Russell Nolan Jevons was a founding member of our VFW who served in World War II as a flight engineer and top-turret gunner in a B-17. What I didn't know until later was that his plane was shot down on his 3rd mission over France with the nose shot out, and 3 engines damaged. All ten crew members got out, which was rare, but 7 of the ten were captured. TSGT Jevons was one of very small % of those shot down to evade capture. Assisted by French underground, he made his way over the mountains into Spain in the dead of winter and eventually made it back home to Wakefield, Ks. He passed away and is buried in Highland, Cemetery, Wakefield, Ks. His son Keith, also a Veteran, has educated us on what it was like for POW/MIA Families.

MAJOR Larry Eugene Martin is a Vietnam War MIA listed from Wakefield Ks. CPT Martin served as electronic warfare officer flying missions Called Wile Weasel missions. Witnesses saw only one parachute when his plane was shot down, July 15, 1968. Initially both men were listed as MIA, The Pilot survived years as a POW and made it home, but CPT Martin did not survive the crash. His

remains were not returned or identified until Nov.1989, but he was finally brought home and laid to rest in Highland Cemetery.

1LT William George Alsop was a co-pilot in World War II. His plane left China on a return flight over the "Hump" Jan 26, 1943, a treacherous route over the Himalayan mountains but did not make it. Neither his plane nor the crew have ever been found. He was declared dead but has never recovered or been brought home.

Seaman Turk served in World War II aboard the Battleship, USS California. On Dec.7, 1941, when it was attacked and sunk at Pearl Harbor. He was not among the survivors that could not be positively identified until 2021. His family member, Carmen Eakes resides in Wakefield Ks. He was listed as MIA until his remains were identified and brought back to Kansas and put to rest at the VA Cemetery near Manhattan Airport.

These are only 4 of the stories of Kansas POW/MIA.

Honor States.org, lists 179 POW and 1,402 MIA from Kansas, (WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam), According to Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, 1,180 are still missing/Unaccounted for from Kansas which include more current conflicts. All of them have stories. Far too many family members have passed away before this action to Designate a POW/MIA Memorial Highway/Bridge in Kansas. It is long overdue for Kansas to designate a POW/MIA Memorial Highway and Bridge. It is also the right thing to do. This should be a bi-partisan supported bill, and I would also request Kansas Waive Funding requirements and pay for the Signs for this.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak.