

TESTIMONY

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

7 February 2012

SB 335

Members of the Senate Transportation Committee, I am Allen Schmidt, a retired Army Medical Service Corps Officer and native of Ellis County Kansas.

Thank-you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of many who stand in support of honoring the ultimate sacrifice of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bryan J. Nichols and all Fallen Veterans who have given their lives in service to this nation.

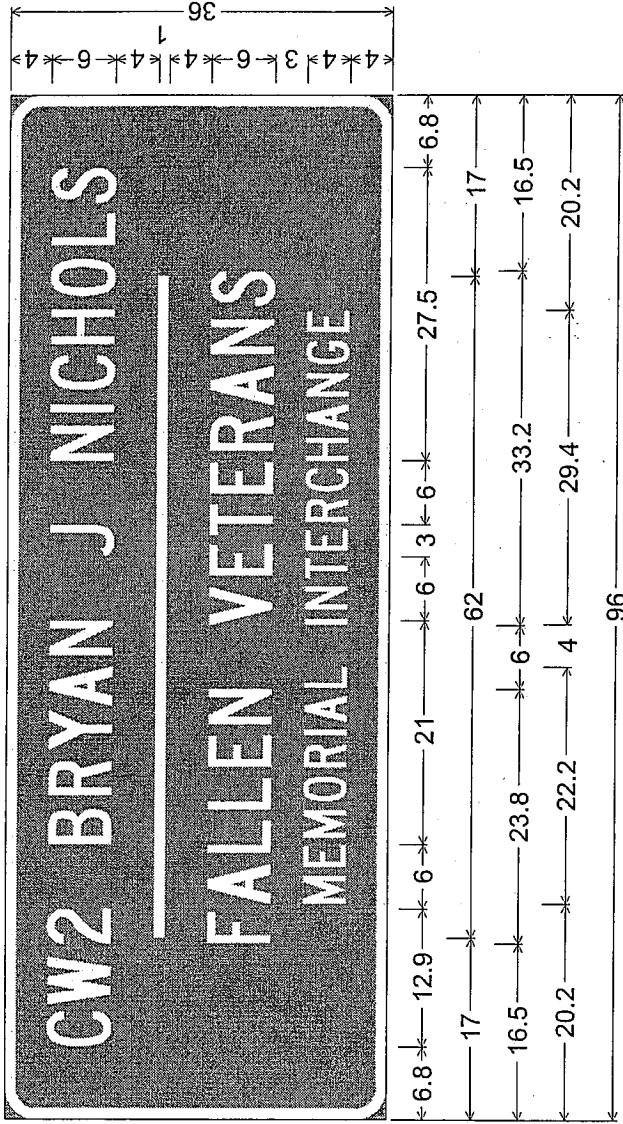
Bryan was a native of Hays, Kansas who always loved to fly and who followed his father, First Sergeant Doug Nichols, into Army service. Doug himself was a decorated combat medic in Vietnam.

Bryan had done several tours in the combat zone in both Iraq and in Afghanistan. He was a CH47 "Chinook" pilot – a Reservist from a unit in Olathe, who had already flown many missions. Only a month or so before the fateful crash, he was flying another mission when his Chinook went down. Although little was released of that downing, a survivor who was in that crash and attended Bryan's funeral on crutches from injuries, said that Bryan's actions saved lives as he cared for the wounded throughout the night until they were rescued. He said that Bryan was the last to leave.

Bryan was called into service again on that fateful morning on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August – this time to fly an important mission to take Navy Seals into a valley to cut off enemy combatants who were fleeing from the area. As Bryan's father tells the story, he was flying into a valley near the drop off zone when a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) was fired from a house on the hillside and hit the Chinook. It went down immediately and all on the chopper were killed. The crew, five members of a Kansas Reserve unit, was killed that fateful day, along with 25 others – many of them Navy Seals. It was the largest loss of life in a single day during the decade long war.

So that brings me to this point. Heroes are in our midst every day. I believe that heroism is in the heart and heroic actions flow from that. They come from courage, conviction, and choices that are made, often in a moment - and not for self - but rather that are selfless. The situation itself often dictates the cost -the level of sacrifice. In this case, as in countless others, the sacrifice meant giving their lives in that service. We must remember that, honor that, and memorialize that so we never forget the cost.

You will notice that this sign carries Bryan's name, but it also honors all Fallen Veterans. Signs are symbols, reminders, memorials, and even testimonies. Bryan's story is a local story but it also carries much national significance. Displayed at the I-70/US 183 interchange at Hays (after we raise the funds) it will be a constant symbol and testimony to all who pass through the heartland, that the cost of freedom belongs to us all but is paid in full by only a few. Bryan and his fallen comrades have paid it for us. I thank you for recognizing their service and their sacrifice.



KI-150 Memorial Interchange conv 2 lines OPTION 2;  
 3.0" Radius, 1.0" Border, White on Green;  
 [CW2 BRYAN J NICHOLS] C; [FALLEN VETERANS] C;  
 [MEMORIAL INTERCHANGE] C;

Table of distances between letter and object lefts.

C	W	2	B	R	Y	A	N	J	N	I	C	H	O	L	S				
6.8	3.9	5.7	9.3	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.7	9.3	9.0	4.5	2.1	4.3	4.6	4.7	4.0	3.3	6.8		
17.0	62.0	17.0																	
F	A	L	L	E	N	V	E	T	E	R	A	N	S						
16.5	3.7	4.7	4.0	4.1	4.0	9.3	4.6	3.7	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.8	4.5	3.3	16.5				
20.2	3.4	2.7	3.5	3.1	3.0	1.3	3.2												
I	N	T	E	R	C	H	A	N	G	E									
6.0	1.4	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.0	20.2							