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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
REGARDING SENATE BILL 127
RELATING TO MEMORIAL HIGHWAY SIGNAGE AND
THE COLLECTION OF SUFFICIENT FUNDS PRIOR TO INSTALLATION**

March 16, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Eric Nichol, State Signing Engineer for the Kansas Department of Transportation. I would like to provide written testimony on behalf of KDOT today in support of Senate Bill 127. The proposed bill will establish a consistent policy for funding of signage related to state highways and bridges given commemorative or memorial designations by the Kansas Legislature.

Some history of the agency's practice with regard to signage for memorial highways and bridges would be beneficial. As early as 1961, the agency would accept private funding in the form of donations or gifts to offset the cost of the sign and installation. However, this practice was inconsistent and oftentimes KDOT paid for the signs from state highway funds. In 1982, KDOT management began to feel the number of memorial sign requests was becoming excessive and the requesters, rather than taxpayers, should pay for the signage, and memorial highway designation bills began to require privately-raised funding to be received by the Secretary to cover the cost of sign creation and installation prior to the signage being installed.

By 2004, many of the signs installed over the prior decades were in disrepair and KDOT was utilizing state taxpayer funds to pay to replace or repair the existing memorial signs. At that time, KDOT requested that an additional 50% be added to the initial sign and installation cost in order to address the fiscal burden of performing maintenance on aging signs as they became faded, dated and in disrepair. Since 2004 legislation has typically provided for the requester to provide private funds to KDOT to cover the cost of the sign and installation, as well as the 50% extra for maintenance fees. When bills are introduced without these costs being covered, KDOT typically will request an amendment to provide consistency with how memorial highway designations have been handled since 2004, so requesters are treated fairly year to year and without regard to the position of the person for whom the memorial designation is sought.

The agency appreciates the willingness of the committee support legislation to provide clarity and uniformity for commemorative and memorial highway signing requests. The proposed bill will formalize the Agency's recent past practice, provide guidance for interested parties prior to making requests for legislation, and most importantly, ensure consistent and fair treatment of signing requests from year to year. It would further ensure commemorative designations have both legislative support and strong community participation.