

MEREDITH SLEICHTER:

Hello. We are so pleased that Representative Barker introduced House Bill 2564, and thank you for allowing us to visit with you about it. My name is Meredith Sleichter and I am the Executive Director of the Eisenhower Foundation. My colleague, Karl Weissenbach, is the Director of the Eisenhower Presidential Library.

Today, I would like to lay the groundwork for our discussion by sharing an eight-minute video with you. The video highlights Dwight D. Eisenhower the Kansan as well as the projects we are currently undertaking at the Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum and Boyhood Home. The video is narrated by WWII veteran and Eagle Communications Chairman Robert Schmidt of Hays.

(Show video)

The Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum is a unique national cultural institution (refer to handout):

- The Eisenhower Presidential Library is one of only 13 Presidential Libraries in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) system and Ike is the only 5-Star General to serve as President of the United States.
- While the federal government, through NARA, offers support for archival staff and campus maintenance, support for exhibits, education programs and community events must be funded through the efforts of the Eisenhower Foundation – making this a private/public partnership.
- In 2015 there were over 187,000 visits to the Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum, and Boyhood Home; Total Researchers – 586; Total Research Visits – 1,185; Total Pages Researched – 9,331,200
- The Library archives contain 26 million pages of manuscripts; 334,500 still photographs; 767,700 feet of motion picture film; 1,130 hours of audio recordings; 33,120 pages of oral history transcripts; 28,550 volumes of books and 70,489 Museum artifacts.

Kansas played an important role in Eisenhower's life; it is where he learned the American Ideal of success through hard work, pursuit of opportunity, and preparation for a purposeful life. Throughout his career, Kansas continued to hold a special place in his heart as evidenced by returning to Abilene during major milestones in his life – after he won the War, to announce his presidency, to build his Museum and Library, and to be laid to rest. In a sense, the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum was his gift to Kansas.

When Eisenhower returned to his hometown after the war on June 22, 1945, he proclaimed "The proudest thing I can claim is that I am from Abilene." He also stated during his famous Guildhall speech in London on June 12, 1945, "I come from the very heart of America."

For more than 60 years, the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum has been a point of pride for Kansas. Not only does it represent the esteem in which we hold Kansas's most prominent citizen, it also pays respect to World War II veterans.

The Foundation and the Library and Museum are working collectively to continue to provide a world-class experience for our visitors, while also teaching current and future generations of Kansans the impact he had on the world stage. As outlined in the video, we are focused on two projects: renovating the museum and expanding Ike Education. We are in the early stages of raising money for these projects and are encouraged by the initial response from Kansans and Americans.

We know Kansans still like Ike. We are currently forming Regional Councils throughout the state. Members of the Regional Councils serve as an area resource for the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum and the Eisenhower Foundation. They ensure visibility of this important national cultural institution while also connecting us to others who wish to support and advance our mission. Members include Julie Kemper Foyer of Mission Hills, Steve and Jacque Adams of Kansas City, Ann Regnier of Leawood, and Robert Schmidt of Hays. These individuals have accepted lead roles in helping bring these projects to fruition.

We also know people across the United States still like Ike as evidenced by the response we receive through direct mail donations. Our donor base grew more than 400% since implementing the direct mail program to more than 11,000 donors representing all fifty states. Many times, the donation includes a brief note from the donor sharing their memories of Ike as their General or President.

Recently, 90-year-old Eva Yungst sent a letter to Mary Jean Eisenhower, Ike's granddaughter. She wrote, *"I am a Holocaust survivor, freed by the Russians. My husband, Henry, was freed by your grandfather, Dwight Eisenhower, from the Buchenwald death camp in April of 1945. He was found in the Camden Forrest undernourished with Typhus. The GIs helped him survive and kept him for three years. They taught him how to sew and helped him recover. My husband lost his whole family in Auschwitz—his mother, father, two brothers and a sister. I lost my father, mother sister and brother-in-law. I am 90 years old, and I wanted you to know that your grandfather is my hero and I will always try to support our veterans. I love your family and am sure that you are proud of him."*

House Bill 2564 is significant because it will provide a dependable annual funding source that will benefit Kansans and bring tourists into our wonderful state. For Kansans, the funding will:

- Expand the number of Kansas K-12 students who come onsite to view the exhibits and participate in Ike Education programs. (refer to education "Report Card" handout)
- Provide world-class public education programs including lectures and book talks.
- Provide world-class museum exhibits

This funding is also an investment in our state because of the economic impact it brings. I have asked Karl to share some information about how this unique cultural institution contributes to the quality of life in our state:

MEREDITH SLEICHTER:

We urge you to pass this bill. The positive responses of both Kansans and Americans thus far to our projects is encouraging, and we hope the State of Kansas will join in this opportunity to preserve and promote Ike's legacy by passing House Bill 2564. Thank you for your consideration of this historic opportunity. Karl and I welcome your questions at this time.