

Mar 8, 2023

ATTN: jennifer.forrester@house.ks.gov

Chairman Francis and members of the House Transportation Committee,

As the Executive Director of the Richard Allen Cultural Center, I rise in strong support of SB 132, establishing a Buffalo Soldier license plate. This plate will serve to publicize the story of the Buffalo Soldiers, and remind our citizens of the contribution of African Americans in our military.

As the named beneficiary of the license funds, we will stand as strong stewards, dedicating a portion of the raised funds towards the establishment of a new Frontier Museum outside the gates of Fort Leavenworth as that effort matures, and the balance will be dedicated to the core mission of the Richard Allen Cultural described below.

### **Buffalo Soldiers**

During the American Civil War, the U.S. Government formed regiments known as the United States Colored Troops. In 1866 Congress reorganized the Army and authorized the formation of two regiments of black cavalry soldiers as the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry and four infantry regiments designated as the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry Regiments. Black soldiers enlisted for five years and received \$13.00 a month. The 10th Cavalry was organized on September 21, 1866, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas with Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson as Commanding Officer. The 10th Cavalry served in the following campaigns: Indian Wars, War with Spain, Philippine Insurrections, and World War II. They were inactivated on March 20, 1944. The American West has fascinated people all over the world since settlers first crossed the Mississippi; however, unless it includes the contributions of the Buffalo Soldiers, any story about “How the West was Won” is incomplete without their story.

Buffalo soldiers are a key part of Kansan culture; so much so that in 1992, initiated by General Colin Powell, the Buffalo Soldier monument was dedicated in 1992 to the memory of the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments of the U.S. Army at Fort Leavenworth, KS. Members of the Richard Allen Cultural Center were key partners in the effort to establish this monument as well as a subsequent bust of Cathy Williams, the first document black woman to serve in the US Army.

### **Richard Allen Cultural Center: Our Mission**

Our mission and purpose is to educate the public about the rich history of African-Americans and their contributions to every phase of American life. We promote a greater awareness of African-American heritage through research and cultural activities that enhance interracial understanding.

## **Highlighting African-American History**

The Richard Allen Cultural Center opened in 1992 to highlight African-American history in Leavenworth, Kansas, at 412 Kiowa Street. In 1992, the museum opened in the former home of U.S. Army Captain William Bly, a Buffalo Soldier during World War I. The home is decorated to look as it would have in the early 1900s. In 2002, an addition was built to the front of the original home to display more items teaching about African-American history in Kansas.

## **Our Museum**

Richard Allen Cultural Center and Museum features artifacts from the Buffalo Soldiers and ruins of Bethel AME Church Underground Railroad Site along with memorabilia belonging to notable African-American figures such as General Colin Powell. We also showcase bronze statues of Buffalo Soldiers and an exclusive Black Dignity photo gallery, known as the Everhard Collection, dating back to the late 1800s.

## **Our Programs**

Educational programs are also offered through museum exhibits, tours, research opportunities and traveling exhibits for the general public. We also have a year-round tutoring program available for any student who needs the service. We have helped over 350 children improve their academic skills.

Please move quickly and pass SB 132 out favorably, and help us publicize this part of Kansas history.

Thank you,

Edna Wagner

Executive Director at Richard Allen Cultural Center & Museum

