

Museum Association of East Muskingum

Operating the

John and Annie Glenn Museum • National Road & Zane Grey Museum
in partnership with Ohio History Connection

Ohio House State & Local Government Committee
The Honorable Marlene Anielski, Chairwoman
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 279

Barbara Hansen, Ph.D. John and Annie Glenn Museum
Executive Director Museum Association of East Muskingum

October 24, 2017

My name is Barb Hansen and I currently serve as Executive Director of the John and Annie Glenn Museum in New Concord. I am here in behalf of the Trustees, staff, and volunteers of the museum in support of House Bill 279, co-sponsored by Speaker Rosenberger and Representative Hill, to include the museum in the Ohio History Connection (OHC) network of historic sites and museums.

We enjoy a high level of collaboration with the Ohio History Connection and have worked closely together since 2009 when we began formal affiliation by agreeing to serve as the local site manager for the OHC National Road / Zane Grey Museum which is located on historic US Route 40, just 10 minutes to the west of the Glenn home in New Concord. Natural connections between the two museums have emerged as opportunities, such as the sharing of volunteers knowledgeable of both sites, new programming opportunities, and encouraging guests to visit both sites. As a museum board, to salute the connection we feel with both museums, we have changed our name to Museum Association of East Muskingum to reflect our broader mission.

The Ohio History Connection is the perfect platform to enable us to showcase the boyhood home of John Glenn. As passionate members of the local community, we view ourselves as stewards of the inspiring story of John Glenn's formative years growing up in small town Southeastern Ohio.

His parents' home, a Craftsman-style bungalow built in 1923 sits along Main Street surrounded by a white picket fence. Its clean cut simplicity is the ideal setting, for it exemplifies Senator Glenn's humble background and honors his personal humility and never ending commitment to his roots. The human element and realization that he was like any other young boy is immediately when guests tour the home and see his tricycle, wooden sled, and ice skates. Visitors also leave with a greater understanding of what life might have been like in a typical American home during the Great Depression.

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The authentically restored boyhood home exemplifies a comment made by Senator Glenn that he had “I have always thought of New Concord and Muskingum College as being at the center of the universe and if you get your start here you can go anywhere.”

Thousands of people have visited the home since it opened on Memorial Day, 2002. Visitors from OVER 30 foreign countries and all 50 states are among those who have experienced the “living history” tours of the home. Over 27,000 students have visited the site and stood in the home of a truly great American hero.

The Board of Trustees will be meeting later this fall to focus on future planning and fund raising for the museum and its volunteers. Obviously, the Ohio History Connection provides advantages of curatorial support, a broader base for marketing, grant writing expertise, and a higher profile statewide, that will support future steps. We look forward to receiving the National Register of Historic Site status and are working toward that designation through fund raising to cover the application process.

When future history books are written there will be a chapter on great American Heroes and near the top of the list will be John H. Glenn Jr., first American to orbit Earth. His death on Thursday, December 8, 2016, was a moment that touched the hearts of Americans and many people across the world. The weekend of tributes, interviews, editorials, special reports, documentaries, and commentaries all seemed to send the message of John Glenn, the pioneer, the humble man from small town America who inspired the world. Such a laser focus clearly reminded **us as a museum staff** that we are the keepers of the legacy of John Glenn the boy, the person, and the man he became who believed that even if he got his start in Appalachian Ohio he could go anywhere.

Senator Glenn’s televised funeral on an icy Saturday afternoon had a mesmerizing effect that captivated all people who were watching. Everyone from Vice President Joe Biden to Glenn’s children praised his humanity and the genuine love he had for learning. Humility and greatness were talked about in the same breath. He was a person who never lost touch with his roots and held respect for every person regardless of their role.

As a museum staff and board, we are committed to refining and telling the story even more eloquently. Nothing tells the story as well as his boyhood home and keeping it in prime condition for future generations is essential. We remind ourselves that there will never be another first American to orbit Earth and it is our responsibility to help others remember his story.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts, representing the board, staff and volunteers. I would be happy to respond to any reactions you might have.

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