



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STEVE HAMBLEY

Chairman Green, Vice Chairman Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee; I am pleased to bring before you today House Bill 22. House Bill 22 would designate a portion of State Route 261 as the Sergeant James F. Allen III Memorial Highway. The specific portion that would be named as such is the roadway between where State Route 261 intersects State Route 94 and State Route 21 in Medina and Summit Counties.

Sergeant Allen was a decorated and honorable soldier. After joining the military two days after 9/11, Sergeant Allen deployed three times; twice to Iraq and once to Afghanistan in support of the War on Terrorism. During these deployments, Sergeant Allen received a number of awards and decorations for his service.

While serving, Sergeant Allen suffered numerous concussions from IED explosions. When he returned home in 2011, he was diagnosed with severe PTSD, and those who knew him best said that it was very difficult for him to return to a normal life. He battled with PTSD for years before sadly succumbing to the mental illness in February of 2016.

I was made aware of Sergeant Allen's sacrifice by his partner and best friend Ashley Rae Yeager. James and Ashley lived in Wadsworth for the last 5 years of James' battle with PTSD. Now, Ashley and James' family continue fighting for Sergeant Allen, and all those who battle with PTSD. By advocating for young soldiers with PTSD, the family is increasing awareness, and advocating for earlier, more appropriate care of the illness. Designating a highway near Ashley and James' home in Wadsworth not only reinforces their message, but will also stand as a daily encouragement to continue the legacy of Sergeant James F. Allen III through goodwill, advocacy, and raising James' children Natalie and Tristan in the way that James would have if he could. This highway will stand as a memorial to Sergeant Allen, his family, and his friends.

I ask for your support of House Bill 22 in recognition of Sergeant James F. Allen III and all who struggle with PTSD. I am available for any questions you may have. Thank you.