

**82<sup>ND</sup> HOUSE DISTRICT**

DEFIANCE, PAULDING, AND VAN WERT  
COUNTIES, AND ALSO THE NORTHWEST  
CORNER OF AUGLAIZE COUNTY

**Committees**

Higher Education and Workforce  
Development; Ways and Means;  
and Armed Services, Veterans  
Affairs, and Homeland Security

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**State Representative Craig S. Riedel**  
**Ohio House of Representatives**

Chairman Green, Vice Chair Greenspan, Ranking member Sheehy, and members of the Ohio Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for letting me speak to you about the importance of House Bill 159 which names May “Drive Ohio Byway Month”.

In 2015 10.6% of sales tax collected by the State was from tourism, and \$33 billion was spent at Ohio's hotels, museums, and other tourist attractions. Cedar Point, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and Hocking Hills have made Ohio a prominent travel destination. These businesses create jobs, bring in tax revenue, and better their surrounding communities. We are facing many challenges when competing for tourism dollars. Michigan's Pure Michigan campaign, West Virginia's Wild and Wonderful West Virginia, and Indiana's Honest-to-Goodness Indiana campaigns are all well-known and visitation to these states have increased. Tourism in Michigan has grown 3.8% in 5 years, Indiana's has increased by 3.3% in the last year, and West Virginia's has tripled in the past 10 years. Officially naming May “Drive Ohio Byway Month” would encourage tourists to seek out these byways and help increase promotional efforts.

May is the start of tourism season in Ohio. Children are on summer break allowing families more time to take a road trip and experience one of the 27 byways the State has to offer. Each byway highlights Ohio's history and beauty, including the Amish County Byway which travels through many Amish communities and allows you to experience their unique culture. The Lincoln Highway Historic Byway was one of America's first coast-to-coast paved roads connecting New York to San Francisco. It travels through the middle of Ohio from Indiana to West Virginia. The Ohio River Scenic Byway located in the southern region of Ohio travels through 14 counties and allows you to drive along the Ohio River through towns that were once part of the underground railroad. The byways accent Ohio's rolling hills, Lake Erie beaches, and national parks that make Ohio a special place to visit. Like our slogan says, you really can "find it here". That is why I am asking the committee to support House Bill 159. Thank you for your time. I will be happy to answer any questions at this time