

Dear Chairman Green, Representative Johnson, sponsor of HB 311, and other members of the Transportation Committee -

It is truly a "labor of love" for me to have the privilege of testifying before you today. The subject matter - Roy Rogers and honoring his memory by renaming a portion of Highway 348, the new "Roy Rogers Happy Trails Highway" is of significant importance to me. House Bill 311 lines up with a passion of mine that began over ten years ago.

As a father of two young children at the time, I began to think of cultural images that would serve as good role models for my children, especially the elder of my children, a son who was approximately four at the time. As I racked my brain trying to think of a current figure, I couldn't come up with anyone from the culture who I felt comfortable with lifting up as someone to emulate. I wasn't looking for a saint, merely someone who consistently lived out timeless virtues in their public and private life. Virtues like, respect for others, kindness, taking into account another's dignity, standing up for justice, and understanding the difference between right and wrong.

Then one day as I was waiting at the checkout line in a Cracker Barrel, I saw a DVD of old Roy Rogers movies. Having grown up at a time with a fascination for the cowboy as an American icon, I decided to purchase the DVD. As I watched those movies it occurred to me that here was the cultural role model I was searching for to share with my son. And better yet, this bigger-than-life icon grew up less than two hours from where we lived. My son watched that DVD, and then wanted other Roy Rogers movies. All the while, my son was not only being entertained by the twist and turns of the exciting plots, but more importantly was receiving a lesson on how to live life.

I shared this journey with my friend, Rev. Tim Throckmorton, who grew up and still lived in Scioto County. He told me about the annual Roy Rogers festival held the week of Roy's birthday and how I should bring my two young children down for a day so they could tour the exhibit room, see Roy's boyhood home, and watch one of the movies shown at the local theater. Those visits only deepened my son's imagination as to Roy Rogers rightful place as a hero.

After some reflection, I shared with my friend Tim that he and I should start a Roy Rogers Character Award breakfast in Portsmouth to correspond with the festival where we would recognize an elementary and junior or high school student as well as one adult in the community that exemplified Roy's high character. We have done that now for the past four years and we created this event because we felt it imperative to reintroduce the spirit of Roy Rogers' high character to new generations that are not familiar with him. And if anyone should know and remember and reflect on why Roy Rogers is an American legend, it should at least be the community of his youth. The Awards breakfast is a way that causes all of us to reflect not only on how Roy lived his life, but maybe, somehow and in some way we too will take an inventory of how we are living our lives and what kind of legacy we will leave for our children and neighbors. Our hope is to inspire the next generation to change the world because Roy Rogers did, and

give encouragement to the older generations that they can still influence our youth. That's why anything that draws attention to Roy Rogers is a very good thing. Public signage along Highway 348 displaying Roy Rogers' name will cause children and teens to ask who he was and why he was so important. That will open the door for many of us to share the stories, watch the movies and t.v. show, and listen to the recordings of one of our own, but more importantly take advantage of a "teachable moment" to advance the timeless virtues consistently practiced by a rare cultural hero.

Thank you in advance for moving HB 311 toward a legislative reality.

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