

Chairman Green, Vice Chair Patton, and fellow committee members, thank you for this unique opportunity to memorialize an American hero.

With mounting pressure from the Russian army in the east, American soldiers were running out of options along the Rhine River as Nazi engineers began demolishing every serviceable bridge into German territory.

Under heavy sniper fire, along a bridge lined with explosives, Sgt. Alexander Drabik became the first American soldier to cross the Rhine in Eastern France into German territory. While still damaged, the bridge held long enough for American armor to cross and begin the march to Berlin.

In Sgt. Drabik's own words, "We ran down the middle of the bridge, shouting as we went. I didn't stop because I knew that if I kept moving they couldn't hit me. My men were in squad column and not one of them was hit. We took cover in some bomb craters. Then we just sat and waited for others to come. That's the way it was"

As he drove through Kansas many years later, he was killed in a tragic car accident on his way to a Company A reunion.

I ask my fellow committee members to support his memory, and this historic commemoration, reaffirming Ohio as a state that raises heroes.