

My full name is Margaret Ann Belkofer and my address is 8290 Wildflower Dr., Powell, OH 43065. My phone # is (740) 917-5597.

Here is my testimony:

My name is Margo Belkofer and I am the surviving spouse of LTC Tom Belkofer who was KIA in Kabul, Afghanistan on May 18, 2010 while serving as the Comptroller (G8) for the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry Division at Fort Drum, NY. Tom and I met while we were both part of the Army ROTC program at BGSU and were married in May 1992 following graduation. We spent 6 ½ years on active duty together when I decided to become a stay-at-home mom following the birth of our second daughter. I then served another year and a half in the Army Reserves. Besides being a mother to our two beautiful daughters, my greatest role in life has been the Army wife to Tom for the 18 years God had given us together. I enjoyed supporting Tom while he served as an artillery battery commander by leading the family support group and also serving on various boards and committees in the military community where we were stationed. The Army brought us together and played a significant role in our personal and professional lives. Tom was eligible to retire in less than 2 years following his death but he enjoyed his service very much and was planning to continue to serve for several more years. Losing him and the Army life we grew to love at the same time so suddenly was very difficult both for me and my daughters but God has blessed us by giving us a wonderful community of friends here in Columbus and our daughters have continued to grow and thrive which would have made their father proud. I have enjoyed getting to know fellow military surviving families through the Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) organization which has made the journey a bit easier. Tom will always be a part of my life and I was blessed to have such a loving, talented and thoughtful husband for the time I was given with him. Because of our shared faith in Christ, I know I will see him again when God calls me home which is what I immediately told the officers who notified me of Tom's passing. Until then, I will seek God's purpose for me in the new roles I am afforded.

Tom loved life and he especially loved being a part of the Army life. He was passionate about the roles and positions he served in while serving in the Ohio Infantry National Guard during college, as a field artilleryman and as a comptroller during his time on active duty. He took the time and made the effort to help his fellow soldiers succeed and cared about them on and off duty. In particular, in the weeks prior to him and his fellow soldier and friend, LTC Paul Bartz, being killed together in the same VBIED incident, Tom had taken the time to personally help Paul with a previous move settlement. Paul thought perhaps his moving expense reimbursements were not calculated correctly and Tom offered to look into it and calculate the figures to see if errors were made. After doing the necessary research, Tom was happy to tell his friend that he submitted the paperwork and that he was in fact due additional funds due to calculation errors. Paul appreciated this small act of kindness and gave Tom one of his challenge coins that Paul had purchased himself as the Personnel Officer (G1) of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mtn Div – this position does not warrant having a challenge coin but Paul wanted to recognize those who went above and beyond to help him and his section with this small token and Tom was honored to receive one for what he considered was simply “doing his job”. That coin was still on Tom's bedside table the morning him and Paul left for Kabul. Tom was known as someone who took his job seriously and made it his mission to improve the procedures that were used in the resource management field in which he served and applied the same criteria for money management professionally as he did in his personal life. Even though it was the “Army's money”, Tom treated it as his own and strived to be as conservative in nature as he could. At his burial service at Arlington, his friend and fellow soldier told several stories how Tom had used this conservative mindset to save his unit funds not only in his own section and personal travel expenses but also in encouraging and insisting others do the same. He cared about his mission to use

the funds he was entrusted to manage wisely. Tom was known as someone who knew the regulations well and strived to follow them for the success of the unit. There are many other positive qualities and stories I could share about Tom and wish I had the opportunity to do so in support of this bill.

Naming this section of SR 795 after Tom would mean a lot to myself, our daughters, his family and his friends as well as fellow service members and veterans. Tom was proud to be a Buckeye and having his name displayed in honor of his service on an Ohio road would be a wonderful way for us and others who see the sign to remember his sacrifice and love for his country in a special way. I know personally, whenever I drive past a similar sign here in Ohio or elsewhere, I am reminded of the sacrifice that person gave to his or her nation or community and it makes me pause and show gratitude for those who selflessly lay down their lives for the benefit of many. It has been an honor to get to know families whose loved ones have been honored with signs here in the Columbus area and it brings a special connection to the bond we share.

Thank you very much for considering the passing of this bill and for continuing to show honor in this special way to those who have gave the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms we often take for granted as a citizen of this great nation.

Blessings, Margo Belkofer