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HB 473 – Sponsor Testimony
Transportation and Public Safety Committee

Chairman Baldrige, Vice-Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony to rename portions of State Route 48 in Southeastern Montgomery County as the Sergeant Kevin J. Lannon Memorial Highway and the Sergeant Cameron H. Thomas Memorial Highway. This piece of legislation will memorialize two brave soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice of their lives to protect our nation.

Sgt. Lannon and Sgt. Thomas both served as Army Rangers, the United States' premier light infantry fighting force specializing in raids and assault missions deep inside enemy territory. Both of these heroes lost their lives while serving our country in combat. They were truly men of courage and selfless sacrifice. Today I want to give you a brief overview of these men to highlight their bravery during their time within the United States Armed Forces.

First, I would like to introduce Sgt. Kevin J. Lannon of Kettering, Ohio.

Sgt. Kevin Lannon:

After graduating from Archbishop Alter High School in Kettering in 1980, Sgt. Kevin Lannon enlisted in the U.S. Army on a medical specialist assignment, also known as a "Medic." After finishing a fast-track basic training, advanced infantry training, and a basic medic course, Sgt. Lannon was stationed in Fort Louis, Washington.



He was challenged by his fellow leaders to join the Airborne Rangers, where he was a 282 Ranger School Graduate. Sgt. Lannon did not stop there. Next, he enrolled in two Special Forces evening classes, where he vigorously trained for 29 weeks, and was taught the skill sets required to perform lifesaving surgeries on the field of battle. With his extensive training, Sgt. Lannon was assigned to 2nd Ranger Battalion, 75th Infantry – A Company / 3rd Platoon, also known as the "Earth Pigs."

Grenada October 25-27, 1983

On October 25, 1983, Sgt. Lannon's Battalion parachuted into Grenada while undergoing immense enemy fire. During this time, Sgt. Lannon was unable to meet his battalion due to the mission changing right after the "jump." Of his own volition, Sgt. Lannon joined his neighboring rangers because they did not have a medic on site and they were receiving heavy enemy fire. At great risk to himself, Sgt. Lannon stayed with this battalion for two days while undergoing intense enemy fire. Five men were killed and 14 men were wounded during those two days and Sgt. Lannon assisted both as a medic and as an infantryman during the entire time. His only concern was for his fellow soldiers, where he was directly responsible for saving several lives by providing immediate medical care.

Sgt. Lannon was not assigned to be a part of this event, in fact he was in the midst of training and by agreeing to go it allowed for others to stay back and attend family affairs. But he never wanted to leave his fellow soldiers behind, so he made the decision to pack his bags and enter the battlefield. He posthumously received the Bronze Star with Valor for his heroic actions. His strong bravery and willingness to protect those around him are something that will be remembered as a part of his legacy.

Next, I'd like to introduce you to Sgt. Cameron H. Thomas, who also graduated from high school in the City of Kettering, Ohio.

Sgt. Cameron Thomas

Sgt. Cameron Thomas went to Fairmont High School (Class of 2012) and during his time there, he joined the men's swim team and practiced mixed martial arts because he knew he wanted to become an Army Ranger. Soon after graduation, Sgt. Thomas enlisted in the U.S. Army and was assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment at Fort Benning, Georgia. During his time in the Army, Sgt. Thomas went on three combat deployments.



A distinguishing achievement for Sgt. Thomas occurred when, at 19 years old, he became the youngest assigned Army Ranger at that time. He was also handpicked to be the assigned sniper for his third deployment in 2017.

The Raid in Afghanistan – April 27, 2017

According to U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, two Army Ranger platoons and a similar-sized Afghan Special Security Forces unit flew on helicopters into the Mohmand Valley, near the headquarters of a leader in a group affiliated with the Islamic State, known as ISIS-K.

A raid at close quarters occurred in the midst of great fires and darkness. Allied airstrikes hit the compound to provide cover to evacuate injured Rangers. In the ensuing fire-fight, several high-level ISIS-K leaders and "upwards of 35 fighters" were killed.

"Within a few minutes of landing, our combined forces came under intense fire from multiple directions and well-prepared fighting positions," U.S. Forces-Afghanistan said in a statement.

Sgt. Cameron Thomas was killed during this raid on an ISIS-K compound as U.S. and Afghan forces targeted high-level insurgent leaders in eastern Afghanistan. He was killed by small-arms fire, according to the Department of Defense.

I ask you today to honor these two brave soldiers. The men and women who voluntarily give of themselves, against all odds, to stand united with their brothers and sisters in defense of our nation, who sacrifice their lives for the protection of our freedom deserve to be remembered for their acts of bravery and heroism. That is why I stand before you now on their behalf to ask that this committee favorably vote to designate and rename portions of State Route 48 in Southeastern Montgomery County located primarily in Kettering and near where both of these fine young men went to high school, as the Sergeant Kevin J. Lannon Memorial Highway and the Sergeant Cameron H. Thomas Memorial Highway.

Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you again for this opportunity to testify today, and I welcome any questions you may have at this time.