



Don Jones
State Representative

Chairman Baldrige, Vice-Chairman McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 503 which creates the Byers Brothers Memorial Highway in Belmont County.

Let me introduce to you a most accomplished military family from the small rural town Somerton in Belmont County, Ohio. John Robert and Lillian Hazel Byers together raised five sons and a daughter.

The oldest son, Roland, enlisted in the Army Air Corp during the Second World War. He was a navigation specialist stationed in Europe. He navigated 43 missions over Germany as a B-17 Navigator. Roland was decorated nine times with the Distinguished Flying Cross with Cluster. He retired from the military as Lieutenant Colonel. Later in life he authored many books including "The Black Dodger."

Kenneth Byers graduated from Somerton High School in 1942 and went to Texas to train as a fighter pilot, but unfortunately he was too tall, and was asked to pilot the B-24 bombers. He flew 12 missions during the latter part of the Second World War. After his service he taught Aeronautics at Kent State University.

Robert Byers attended Ohio State University and became part of the ROTC Program in the 1950's. After graduation he enlisted in the United States Air Force. He flew B-47s out of the Rickenbacker Air Base in Columbus. As part of the Strategic Air Command he flew many missions during the cold war near the Russian Border. He also flew close to 60 cargo missions from Dover, Delaware to the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Bill was a 1951 graduate of Somerton High School and enlisted in the Army. He was stationed in Kentucky at Fort Knox. He was part of the armored division and stayed stateside his military career. He left the service as a Corporal.

The youngest of the Byers Brothers, Donald, did not serve in the military, due to his older brothers serving. Don graduated from Barnesville High School in 1952 and became a bus driver for Greyhound. Don transported thousands of military women and men during his career and has been considered a veteran because of this service.

Their daughter Virginia worked in Akron Ohio at the Goodyear factory - Blimp Division during the Second World War. Her son, Keith Byers enlisted in the Army during the Korean and Vietnam era and helped the coordination of the Bob Hope USO Tours. He gained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

I have had many conversations with Don Byers and he is quite the gentleman. The stories he's told really show how these patriots earned the nick name, Greatest Generation. Naming a stretch of highway for these American heroes is the least we can do to thank them.

Chairman Baldrige, Vice-Chairman McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponser testimony on HB 503 and I ask for your support. Thank you.
