

Presentation in Support of Senate Bill 62, Establishing October 4th as “Rutherford B. Hayes Day” Sponsored by Senator Brenner and Senator Reineke

December 3, 2024

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairman Dean, Ranking Member Brennan and members of the House State and Local Government Committee,

As Bill has already stated, thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 62.

My name is Billy Wisneski, I am a member of the Rutherford B Hayes Heritage committee, a proud resident of the City of Delaware, OH and a local presidential historian that has spent several years studying the writings and actions of President Hayes.

In my effort, along with the committee, to bring appropriate recognition to, and educate our community about, President Hayes, I was able to recognize qualities of the man that made him someone worthy to honor.

President Hayes was a man of integrity, he embraced humility and he embodied accountability. He followed his maxim, “he serves his party best, who serves his country best.” Today, that still holds true. Hayes acted solely in the best interest of his country - not of party, not of self.

President Hayes never sought power. Somehow, power always found him. He was nominated, without his knowledge, to represent the Second District of Ohio in the United States House of Representatives by his constituents. Party bosses sought him to run for Governor of Ohio, believing he was the best man for the time. Entering the Republican Convention in 1876 - Hayes was an after thought, coming in 5th out of the 7 candidates on the first ballot. After clinching the nomination after the 7th ballot, in his acceptance speech, he vowed to run for one term. He kept that promise.

Hayes was not someone to do what was the most popular at the time. He bucked both parties and often. He worked on Civil Rights reform in Congress, as Governor and as President. When he became president, he worked on reforming Civil Service. He believed that those appointed to positions in the government should be qualified for those position. In a time when most political appointed posts were given to campaign contributors and friends - who had no place in these positions - this effort upset both parties. He was not successful and this practice, unfortunately, continues today.

As I mentioned, Hayes vowed to run for one term. Being a man of integrity and having the accountability of his staff and family, he did just that. He would rather work for the good of his country than work for the good of a re-election campaign.

There are many reasons, many stories as to why Senate Bill 62 should be approved. I will leave you with this one. During the Civil War, Major Hayes was shot 5 times. During one of those injuries,

Hayes found himself on the ground, lying next to a wounded Confederate Soldier. Many might think that they, in spite of being wounded, would fight each other to the bitter end. Instead, embodying humility, Hayes befriended the soldier. They spoke of their families and vowed that should the other die here, the other would find their families and tell them of their bravery and that they loved them.

That is why President Rutherford B Hayes should be honored. That is why, today, we ask to have the House of Representatives approve Senate Bill 62 establishing October 4th as Rutherford B Hayes Day.

Thank you.