

Testimony of Andrew C.M. Mizsak, M.A.P., MBM

Vice Commander/Administrative Officer of the James A. Garfield Civil War Round Table

Proponent Testimony before the Ohio Senate Committee on Local Government

House Bill 61

Tuesday, September 12, 2023

11:30 AM

North Hearing Room

Ohio Senate

Senate Building

1 Capitol Square

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Good Morning Chairwoman O'Brien, Vice Chairwoman Gavarone, Ranking Member DeMora, Senator Kunze, and Senator Manning:

My name is Andrew Mizsak, and I am the Vice Commander and Administrative Officer of the James A. Garfield Civil War Round Table. We are a community-based history organization based in Southeastern Cuyahoga County that was established in 2015. We have taken this name as a tribute to the greatest citizen ever to come from Cuyahoga County, and because the area we are rooted in is the boyhood homes of the 20th President of the United States¹.

In our eight years of existence, we have provided community-based historical outreach and programming in 10 Northeastern Ohio Counties², plus the 2023 Civil War Round Table Congress Annual Conference³. In 2018, our organization stood up the first *ad hoc* committee dedicated to celebrating the Bicentennial of the Birth and Sesquicentennial of the Presidency and Death of President James A. Garfield⁴. Since 2016, our organization has been the host organization of the annual Garfield Symposium. This year's Garfield Symposium – the 10th annual – is scheduled for Saturday, November 11, 2023, which would also be the 167th Wedding Anniversary of James and Lucretia Garfield⁵.

I come before you today to respectfully request your favorable consideration of House Bill 61, a Bill that would designate November 19th as James A. Garfield Day in the State of Ohio. This bill, which our organization has supported prior to its introduction in the House during this General Assembly, has been a key legislative priority for our

¹ James A. Garfield was born on November 19, 1831, in Orange Township (now Moreland Hills), Cuyahoga County, Ohio. President Garfield, as a boy, also lived for a brief time in Bedford Township, Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

² Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Erie, Geauga, Lake, Medina, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas, Wayne Counties.

³ Vice Commander Andrew Mizsak was a panelist during a session at the 2023 Civil War Round Table Congress Annual (Sustainability) Conference in Gettysburg, PA, on Saturday, August 26, 2023.

⁴ www.Garfield200.org

⁵ www.JamesAGarfieldCWRT.org

organization since the 133rd General Assembly, as evidenced by the attached Legislative Priority Sheets⁶.

The Members of the James A. Garfield Civil War Round Table believe that President Garfield, an individual who was named as a Great Ohioan in 2013, and is honored in the exhibit in the crypt⁷, merits the naming of this day because of his distinguished career of public service that spanned 22 years, beginning with his service in the Ohio Senate in the 54th and 55th General Assemblies⁸. During his time in this body, Senator Garfield represented the 26th Senate District from 1859-61⁹, which includes portions of today's 27th and 28th Senate Districts. He was also the Senate's primary advocate to support President Lincoln and his efforts to preserve the Union, and met President Lincoln for the first time following the joint convention of the General Assembly on February 13, 1861, when President-Elect Lincoln addressed both chambers in the newly-finished Hall of the House of Representatives¹⁰.

I can share with you much more about the amazing life of this great individual whose life was cut short on September 19, 1881, following his being shot on July 2, 1881.

However, I want to focus on James A. Garfield as a great Ohioan as to why the designation of President Garfield's birthday as James A. Garfield Day is warranted:

- 1.) As a State Senator, James A. Garfield advocated for libraries in schools. He viewed education as the ultimate equalizer, and to allow children to access books so they could advance their own self-education, was a priority of his, as his own books were some of his prized possessions.¹¹
- 2.) Senator Garfield selflessly resigned from the Ohio Senate in August 1861 so that he could serve as an Officer in the Ohio Volunteer Militia – the precursor to the Ohio National Guard – and defend the Union¹². He did not just talk the talk of preserving the Union, he walked the walk. President Garfield's family would then have their own storied legacy in the Ohio Army National Guard.
- 3.) He championed what would become today's Department of Education, Department of Higher Education, and State Library of Ohio.¹³

I chose these three particular items because they speak to learning and service, two hallmarks of the life of James A. Garfield. If President Garfield were here today, I am sure he would be humbled by the designation of his birthday as a day to honor him, and I am sure he would want to use the day as an opportunity for Ohioans to learn – perhaps about Ohio's role in the Civil War, or the Presidents from Ohio, or how our

⁶ James A. Garfield Civil War Round Table State Legislative Priorities 2020 – Present. (3 attachments)

⁷ James A. Garfield was designated by the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board as a Great Ohioan in 2013. He is included in the digital exhibit in the basement of the Ohio Statehouse.

⁸ Records of the Ohio General Assembly (State Library of Ohio)

⁹ **Garfield**, Peskin, Allan. 1978. Kent State University Press

¹⁰ **Garfield**.

¹¹ **Garfield**.

¹² [Presidential Series - James A. Garfield \(nationalguard.mil\)](http://nationalguard.mil)

¹³ **Garfield**.

government functions. And, perhaps, President Garfield would hope that this day would inspire others to go into public service.

Ohio has a wonderful tradition of designating days after those who had a significant impact on Ohio – from General Casimir Pulaski¹⁴ to Dean Martin¹⁵ to John Glenn¹⁶ President Ulysses Grant¹⁷. The Members of the James A. Garfield Civil War Round Table believe that the namesake of our organization is yet another great person who should have a day designated for them. With that said, I would also be remiss if I did not state for the record that our organization also believes that every President from Ohio should have their own day.

Designated days have the opportunity to drive conversation, promote heritage tourism, create educational and volunteer or philanthropic opportunities, and allow the best state in the Union the ability to brag about its sons and daughters who have made an indelible mark on our State, our nation, and our world. President James A. Garfield is such a person.

Madam Chair, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today. I would also like to thank Representatives Troy and Callender for their sponsorship of this legislation, and Senator Dolan and his staff for hearing our thoughts about this bill.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have. I respectfully request your favorable consideration of this legislation, and it's reporting out of committee, and to the full Senate.

Thank you once again, Madam Chair, and Members of the Committee.

¹⁴ Ohio Revised Code Section 5.222 – General Pulaski Day

¹⁵ Ohio Revised Code Section 5.2220 – Dean Martin Day

¹⁶ Ohio Revised Code Section 5.2270 – John Glenn Friendship 7 Day

¹⁷ Ohio Revised Code Section 5.2532 – Ulysses S. Grant Day