



Senator Nickie J. Antonio

Sponsor Testimony: Senate Bill 183

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, and members of the Ohio Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 183, which would designate a portion of I-90 in Cuyahoga County as the “Lance Corporal James Patrick Rizzo Memorial Highway.”

James “Jimmy” Rizzo spent his early days as a Boy Scout, a star defensive back for Cleveland’s Shaw High School football team, and a catcher for the local Bratenahl Braves. He became known amongst his peers as a genuine, hardworking member of his community. Soon after graduating High School and to the surprise of his family, Jimmy announced that he had joined the U.S. Marine Corps, the year was 1966. Lance Corporal Rizzo served in Vietnam in the 3rd Marine Division where he earned 20 Service Ribbons, including the Bronze Star with Valor, the Purple Heart, the Combat Action Ribbon, and the Republic of Vietnam Service Medal.

Tragically, the son of Murphy and Catherine Rizzo, Lance Corporal Rizzo was killed in action on February 8, 1968 after attempting to gain support for his platoon during a ground assault. His squad leader, James Feasel, testified that Lance Corporal Rizzo had selflessly left a “safe position” to transmit for help on the radio, where he was fatally injured by enemy fire.

This piece of legislation was inspired by John Flowers, a friend and former classmate of Lance Corporal Rizzo, who reached out to ask that his friend be formally recognized in the spirit of the military ethos of “No Man Left Behind.” As John told us, Lance Corporal Rizzo gave his “all in a very unpopular war,” and his memorial would help to show respect the legacy of a “stand-up guy who had a short, but impressive life.”

The northeast-bound and southwest-bound lanes of I-90 between East 55th Street and East 72nd Street were selected because Lance Corporal Rizzo was an active resident of Cuyahoga County and a proud alumnus of the nearby Shaw High School. His final resting place also resides in Calvary Cemetery near this portion of the highway.

While it’s impossible to adequately express his sacrifice in words, the dedication of a memorial highway will serve as a poignant reminder of the mark he left on the world, a legacy that remains alive through his family and the community he held close to his heart.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 183. I am happy to answer questions at this time.