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Committees:

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and natural resources

Gail Pavliga
State Representative

Thank you, Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee for the opportunity to speak on House Bill 251.

House Bill 251 will designate a portion of State Route 88 in Portage County after Ravenna Patrolman James R Wert. Patrolman James Wert graduated in 1973 from Windham High School. During his academic career at Windham, James participated in Varsity Football, Track, and Basketball.

After graduation, James attended Kent State University in the fall of 1973, he then transferred to Hiram College in 1974. While at Hiram, James participated in a work-study program as a dispatcher for the Hiram Police Department. James then decided to join the U.S. Army in July 1976. During his time in the Army, he earned the highest efficiency ratings possible and received the "Army Good Conduct Medal." James also received expert marksman awards for rifle, pistol, and grenade launcher. James was honorably discharged from the Army in July 1979.

After serving in the U.S. Army, James Wert decided to become a police officer. He was then appointed to the Ravenna Police Department on February 1st; he honorably chose Ravenna because he wanted to be close to his family and serve the area where he grew up.

Flash forward to around Midnight on January 31st in 1981, less than a year into his duties, Patrolman Wert stopped a suspected drunk driver. After proceeding with the arrest James began to drive to State Route 88, he then pulled off to adjust the arrested party's handcuffs.

A struggle ensued and additional Ravenna police officers arrived to assist Patrolman Wert. At that time a second drunk driver went left of Route 88 and struck James Wert. Patrolman Wert was only 25 when he was tragically killed in the line of duty on January 31st, 1981.

House Bill 251 will honor the life and memory of Patrolman James Wert in the area that he called home.

Thank you once again Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee for hearing this piece of legislation today. I am open to any questions.