

Testimony in Support of Ohio House Bill 452

Designating October 1st as 761st Tank Battalion Day

To: The House Veterans and Military Development Committee

From: Pastor Dale Anthony DeGroat, Second Baptist Church of Springfield, Ohio

Date: March 18, 2026

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Pastor Dale Anthony DeGroat. I lead the Second Baptist Church of Springfield, a cornerstone of faith founded in 1859. I am writing to offer proponent testimony for House Bill 452, not only as a clergyman but as a witness to the living legacy of the late Deacon Lymon Alexander.

Deacon Alexander was a living embodiment of the 761st Tank Battalion's motto, "Come Out Fighting." While history recognizes the "Black Panthers" of the 761st as the first all-Black armored unit to see combat—enduring 183 days of continuous frontline action—we in Springfield knew Lymon as the man who brought that same valiant spirit to our streets for over 80 years.

Lymon was a man of immense intellect and character. A graduate of both Wilberforce University and The Ohio State University, he used his education to serve as the Chief Probation Officer for the Clark County Common Pleas Court. He was also a lifelong member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., the first intercollegiate Greek-letter fraternity for Black men. Like his fraternity brothers before him, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Thurgood Marshall, Deacon Alexander understood that leadership and scholarship were tools for the "uplifting of humanity".

His commitment to duty never wavered, even as his health declined. In 2005, despite his advanced years and significant health challenges, Deacon Alexander was a vital part of my ordination service. His presence that day was a bridge between generations; a man who had fought for global freedom was now laying hands on the next generation of spiritual leadership.

I recall visiting him in the nursing home shortly before he passed later that year. In a rare moment of reflection, he shared a harrowing memory of being pinned down with his unit in a location with only one way in and one way out. He described the tension of knowing enemy soldiers were monitoring that lone exit, where every second was filled with danger. It is one thing to read of such bravery in a textbook; it is another to hear it from a man who spent his retirement as a Scoutmaster, mentoring young men in the very values that kept him alive in that tank.

To designate October 1st as 761st Tank Battalion Day is to ensure that the courage of men like Lymon Alexander is never forgotten. He didn't just save a continent; he came home and helped build a better Ohio. By honoring the 761st, you honor a "faithful and devoted" servant who proved that a hero's work is never truly finished.

I urge the committee to favorably report HB 452.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Dale Anthony DeGroat

The Second Baptist Church, Springfield, Ohio