



**The Land of U.S. Grant, Inc.**

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**Senate Transportation Committee  
Senate Bill 302 — Proponent Testimony  
February 11, 2026**

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Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 302, which would create a “Land of U.S. Grant” organizational license plate. I additionally wish to thank Senator Johnson for introducing this legislation.

I speak today on behalf of the Land of U.S. Grant. I am additionally a member of the following historical and patriotic organizations, all of which authorize me to express their support of Senate Bill 302: the Grant Monument Association, the Ulysses S. Grant Association (which is the organization that founded the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library), the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, the Ohio Department of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and the Civil War Round Table of Central Ohio.

First, some background on the sponsor organization: The Land of U.S. Grant is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the role that Georgetown and Point Pleasant, Ohio played in the life of the famed general and president. The organization maintains Grant’s birthplace in Point Pleasant, as well as his family home and tannery and the school he attended as a child in Georgetown. All of these sites would benefit from the funds raised by purchases of the license plate. I would add that with the help of the Ohio History Connection and other partners, the Land of U.S. Grant strives to keep alive the history and spirit of Brown County, where Georgetown is located, and Clermont County, where Point Pleasant is located, and the role that region played in forming its favorite son. Every April, the organization celebrates Grant’s birthday with its signature U.S. Grant Days. And for three years, Grant’s birthday, April 27, has been designated by statute—specifically, Section 5.2532 of the Revised Code—as “Ulysses S. Grant Day” in our state.

The contribution that the Land of U.S. Grant license plate would make to historic preservation is inseparable from the inspiring story of the man this license plate would honor. On April 27, 1822, a baby who would be named Hiram Ulysses Grant was born in that small wooden frame house in Point Pleasant. It is a distinctly American trait that those who command armies or even become president often begin life not in palaces or gilded mansions, but start from humble circumstances and advance with the singular potential that this country offers. Given that the principal vocation of his life was service to his country, it is fitting that, due to a clerical error connected with his application to the United States Military Academy at West Point, his initials became “U.S.”

*“...and this place (Georgetown) remained my home...”*

Although Grant would, like the mythical Ulysses, dwell in many places over the course of his life, he never lived in any other state longer than he lived in Ohio. And he never lived in any one house longer than he did in his boyhood home in Georgetown. Like his birthplace, that house—and the humble schoolhouse that played such an important role in his formation—deserve to be preserved and brought to public attention. They play an irreplaceable role in educating Americans and visitors from abroad about the life of a man who was second to none in the fame he achieved in his time worldwide.

Here is some background as to what propelled him to such a high place in the American pantheon. Grant graduated from West Point in 1843, and the traits of the great soldier were already visible in the gallantry he displayed in his earliest combat experience during the Mexican-American War. Not surprisingly, when the Civil War broke out, Grant offered his services to the Union cause. He rose to become supreme commander due to his immense intelligence, courage, hard work, tenacity, resilience, and the ability to grasp both strategic and tactical challenges that had proven to be too much for so many Union commanders.

Over the course of his battles and campaigns, including at Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, the Wilderness Campaign, the Petersburg Campaign, and the Appomattox Campaign, General Grant was the principal author of Union victory. His character was a combination of warlike resolve, as when he demanded “unconditional and immediate surrender” at Fort Donelson, and compassion. When he received General Robert E. Lee’s surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, General Grant’s magnanimous surrender terms won him lasting gratitude from those who had fought his armies on the battlefield.

And he was one of history’s great liberators as his military victories enabled the emancipation of enslaved people. He recognized slavery as the cause of the Civil War, and had no higher priority during his post-Civil War career than to advance the full meaning of that newly won freedom. As general-in-chief during the early years of Reconstruction, he worked with members of Congress to push a Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which, among other things, guaranteed “the equal protection of the laws.”

After he became president, he secured the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibited racial discrimination in voting, and then secured the rest of the legal architecture behind the federal guarantee of equal rights—the law establishing the Department of Justice, five enforcement acts that protected Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment rights, and the first desegregation law of national scope, the Civil Rights Act of 1875. The general who had crushed the powers sustaining slavery became the president who crushed the Ku Klux Klan.

The Age of Grant was the age of a multiracial American republic. Tragically, a generation after his presidency, a new era of Jim Crow’s disfranchisement undid much of his work. But enough of the legal architecture Grant helped to build for the protection of equal rights survived to enable the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement of the twentieth century.

Grant’s presidency was rich in other achievements in both domestic and foreign policy. He successfully took on the most serious fiscal problems the government had ever faced, refinancing and substantially reducing an unprecedented national debt exceeding \$2 billion while cutting taxes by \$300 million. He secured the return to the gold standard, which, upon taking effect in 1879, was accompanied by an abrupt end to a major depression. His peace policy made the humane treatment of Native Americans a priority and helped save them from extinction.

Consider also President Grant's contributions toward international peace. Our eighteenth president averted threats of war with Spain and Great Britain while maintaining the nation's honor. His successful settlement of the *Alabama* claims with Great Britain, which arose from claims of damages during the Civil War from Confederate commerce raiders built in British shipyards, established the principle of international arbitration for the resolution of disputes between nations involving questions of paramount importance. It led to organized efforts to promote alternatives to war over the next several generations.

Grant's singular accomplishments did not end when he retired from the White House. During his two-and-a-half-year trip around the world, former President Grant established a model of public diplomacy for future presidents. And who can forget the dramatic story of the last year of his life, as Grant raced against death to write his autobiography? His *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* is one of the greatest works of American literature.

In his personal life, he and his wife, Julia, had as happy a marriage as any couple who ever occupied the White House. First lady Julia Dent Grant's 200th birthday occurred just two weeks ago—a milestone that was recognized in a proclamation by Governor DeWine. While her husband was stationed with the peacetime army on the Pacific Coast, Mrs. Grant lived for a period of time in Bethel, Ohio, where she gave birth to Ulysses S. Grant, Jr., in 1852. He would be nicknamed “Buck” because of his birthplace in the Buckeye State. And all four of President Grant's children adored him, with each of the four thinking he or she was his favorite child.

At the time of Grant's death in 1885, he was mourned by both former Confederates and former slaves—and across every stratum of American society. Today, his reputation has been making a remarkable comeback, and he is being celebrated by factions that usually disagree sharply with each other in our polarized society.

As our nation marks its 250th birthday, consider that it almost did not make it through its first century intact. One hundred sixty-five years after the outbreak of the bloodiest war in American history, for all of its challenges, this nation has not only endured, but thrived. It never again approached a civil war. Grant would be the first to shift credit from himself to the brave soldiers who fought under him. But no single American leader was more prominent in the formative period that was the Civil War–Reconstruction era than he was. It is fitting that President Grant was the one who provided over the country's centennial 150 years ago.

In fact, at the time of his death, and for years afterwards, he was as highly regarded in the nation's memory as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. (Speaking of which, an Ohio Land of U.S. Grant license plate would be a nice counterpart to the State of Illinois' longstanding Land of Lincoln license plate.) The turnout of 1.5 million people in New York City for Grant's funeral marked the largest assemblage of people in one place in the history of the North American continent up to that time. And another 1 million people turned out twelve years later to dedicate the colossal neoclassical monument that is best known as Grant's Tomb. What more stark illustration can there be of what is possible in America than contemplating the events between Grant's birth in that humble frame house in Point Pleasant and his burial in the largest mausoleum in the Western Hemisphere?

This the land of U.S. Grant. The proposed license plate helps to spread the word that this is where this extraordinary general and president came from, and that we all should advance the highest principles of service to country that he embodied. Thank you.