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Ways and Means (Ranking Member)

Finance and Appropriations

**Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Development, and Natural Resources
(Ranking Member)**

State and Local Government

Public Utilities

Armed Services



23rd House District

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HB 61 Sponsor Testimony: House State and Local Government Committee

Chair John, Vice-Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 61, which designates November 19th as “James A. Garfield Day” in Ohio. This is requested to commemorate his birthday and honor a native son of Ohio who rose to hold our nation’s highest office.

At the request of National Park Service officials at the James A. Garfield Home and National Historical Site in Mentor (Lake County, Ohio), I have been asked to introduce this legislation. Native Ohioan James A. Garfield served in the Civil War, was a member of the U. S. House of Representatives, and was elected as our 20th President in 1880.

By the time of his death at age 49 in 1881, James Abram Garfield had been a teacher, college principal, minister, state legislator, lawyer, Civil War general, congressman, U.S. senator-elect, and president of the United States. Born in Orange Township, Ohio, in November 1831, he was the youngest of four children born to Abram and Eliza Ballou Garfield, who had carved a farm out of the frontier of Ohio’s Western Reserve. When James was almost two his father died, leaving the family in poverty. At age 16 James took a job as a canal boat tow boy on the Ohio canals. His canal career ended after six weeks when he contracted malaria and had to return home.

In 1851 James entered the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute (later Hiram College) in Ohio. In 1854 he enrolled at Williams College in Massachusetts, graduating with honors in 1856. Garfield’s speaking ability gained him leadership positions, including principal of the Eclectic Institute in 1857. That same year he began preaching in northeast Ohio. In 1858 he married Lucretia Rudolph and was elected to the Ohio Senate on an antislavery platform in 1859.

When the Civil War began in 1861, Garfield became lieutenant colonel of the 42nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Given brigade command in 1862, he won minor victories in Kentucky and was promoted. In the fall of 1862 these and other military accomplishments led to his election to the U.S. House of Representatives. Congress did not meet until December 1863, so he remained with the army as chief of staff to Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans through the Chickamauga campaign in 1863.

Garfield’s congressional career began in December 1863 and lasted 17 years. As head of the House Appropriations Committee from 1871-75, he managed the country’s finances, reduced government

spending, and fought inflation. He pushed for civil service reform to end abuses of the patronage system. He took a moderate stance of protective tariffs, a major issue in the 1880 campaign.

Elected to the U.S. Senate in January 1880, he was asked to nominate John Sherman for president at the Republican National Convention in Chicago. When the convention deadlocked, Garfield became the nominee. He was elected 20th U.S. president in November and inaugurated in March 1881. His term was cut short on July 2 when he was assassinated by Charles Guiteau, a political fanatic. Garfield died September 19.

Ms. Chairman, and Committee members, I will now defer to my joint sponsor and fellow Lake Countian Representative Callender to provide his testimony on this bill. Thank you for your attention and consideration.