

In Support of Ohio Senate Bill 261

February 12, 2020

My name is Allen Perk, I am a resident of Columbus, Ohio and I am the CEO of XLN SYSTEMS where I employ 13 computer and network engineers. We provide information technology and cyber security services throughout Ohio. In addition, I sit on three distinguished boards here in Columbus; the Lieutenant Governors CyberOhio cyber security board, Franklin University's Center for Cyber Security and the National Federation for Independent Business.

One thing I was always told about my ancestry, which is a combination of Italian, Czech and Bohemian, is that the eastern European's are a very proud, self-reliant and hardworking people. In days past, many found themselves yearning for the freedom and opportunities they heard about in a place called America. They knew this was the land of opportunity and freedom and once they arrived, they didn't take that freedom for granted. They did not seek a handout, only Freedom and a chance for prosperity. They built businesses, churches, communities and families. They became Americans! Yes they remembered where they came from, the values and traditions, but they welcomed with open arms the new values and new traditions and along with it they cherished the privileges and freedoms that we have here and they were very grateful to become Americans.

I can tell you at least one story about an individual with heritage from the Eastern Europe block. You may have heard his name at one time, my father Ralph Perk, Cleveland Ohio's 51st mayor during the 1970s. My father believed in the "American way" and he worked his way to a successful political career and a successful personal life. Despite having to drop out of the 11th grade to financially support his family, he and my Mom, Lucy, (by the way I was born on her birthday) raised 7 children and each in their own way held true to the religious faith and values taught to us by our parents. It helped us become a Judge, a Fireman, a Computer Programmer, a Marketing Director and yes, a Small Businessman.

My father felt so strong about his Eastern European heritage, he organized and founded the American Nationalities Movement. This organization condemned the aggressive Soviet policies that had caused the subjugation of many 'captive' nations to harsh communist regimes. Since 1990, the American Nationalities Movement has held annual "Freedom Celebration" banquets and has awarded "Freedom" medals to its steadfast supporters including one to President George H. W. Bush. Despite my fathers death in 1999, this organization is alive and well thanks to my brother, Judge Ralph Perk Jr.

In conclusion, I encourage you to support the creation of the Office of Eastern European Affairs and to do so, you will continue to enrich our State with hard working freedom loving Americans with Eastern European ancestry.