



Representative Angie King
Ohio's 84th District

Chairman McClain, Vice Chair Dobos, Ranking Member Grim, and members of the House Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 131, designating portion of highway through St. Marys Ohio as the Army SSgt. Charles V. Kettler Memorial Highway.

Charles V. Kettler was born in St. Marys, Ohio on April 13, 1920, one of the eight children of Henry and Catherine Kettler. Charles attended Memorial High School and by the time he graduated in 1939, he had earned the nickname "Chick." After graduation, Chick Kettler worked briefly at the Equity Dairy Store before he secured employment with the St. Marys Foundry. Chick Kettler joined Company K, 3rd Battalion, 148th Infantry Regiment, Ohio Army National Guard, stationed at St. Marys, just one day before the entire 37th Buckeye Division was called into Federal service.

He would join two of his brothers, Sergeant Arthur J. Kettler and Corporal William A. Kettler who were already in the National Guard. All three Company K soldiers would go on to serve together in the South Pacific during the Second World War.

The 37th Division would arrive in the Fiji Islands during the month of June, 1942. After fortifying the Islands, the Division moved on to Guadalcanal the following spring. The 3rd battalion of the 148th Infantry Regiment was part of two Battalions joining the Marines in what would become the Munda Campaign. They would be the assaulting forces on the Island of New Georgia in the Solomon Islands which went into action on July 5th, 1943. During the fighting to drive the Japanese off the island and capture Munda Airfield, the Battalion would see heavy fighting and suffer many casualties and hardships. On July 11, 1943, during the fighting, Staff Sergeant Charles V. Kettler was mortally wounded. SSgt. Kettler, his Platoon Leader, and other

fellow soldiers were counter attacking a Japanese machine gun position when SSgt. Kettler moved out alone and assailed the position. After several attempts, SSgt. Kettler destroyed the Japanese position with grenades. In doing so, he was struck down by machine gun fire. SSgt. Kettler was evacuated from the field and taken to an aid station somewhere in the Fiji Islands where he would succumb to his wounds. The actions of SSgt. Kettler on that day were witnessed by his classmate, Charles Henne, who was now a Captain and in command of M Company.

Captain Henne would write that SSgt. Kettler attacked straight into the guns in what amounted to a suicide mission before destroying the enemy position. For his actions that day, SSgt. Charles V. Kettler would be posthumously awarded the nation's third highest award, which can only be awarded for valor, the Silver Star medal. SSgt. Charles V. "Chick" Kettler was laid to rest in the Manilla American Cemetery in the Philippines among 16,859 of our military dead who lost their lives in the Asia-Pacific Theater; a white Veteran's cross marks his grave.

On Veterans Day, 2022, a bronze plaque was affixed to the Ohio Army National Guard Memorial in St. Marys, Ohio to forever memorialize the sacrifice made by SSgt. Charles V. Kettler.

It is an honor for me to have the opportunity to acknowledge the service of this great American and fellow Ohioan. Memorializing him through naming a portion of highway through St. Marys will not only pay tribute to his extraordinary accomplishments, but also instill a sense of pride and gratitude with the community that he was raised in.

I thank you for hearing testimony on House Bill 131 and welcome any questions.