

December 11, 2023

Chair McClain, Vice Chair Dobos, Ranking Member Grim and all the Transportation Committee:

I am writing in support of naming the section of State Route 13 in Knox County, Ohio, to honor Mr. William "Bill" Burgett.

I knew Mr. Burgett well as I was raised near his home and I was raised with his children. Mr. Burgett was a very knowledgeable in his field of construction, but I didn't know how smart Mr. Burgett was until he wrote a book about Kokosing Construction Company. It was 60 years of making an honorable construction company and all the people that helped make it what it is today. I have a copy if you want to read it or I can get you a copy from Kokosing Construction Company. Representative Beth Lear has her own copy also.

How do I explain who Bill Burgett is and what he has done for my community, county, state and nation? Many people have heard of Kokosing Construction Company, but many do not know how it started. In 1951, Mr. Burgett combined his love for building things and his need for a job, and started Kokosing Construction Company. In the early years, Mr. Burgett wore many hats such as estimator, supervisor, laborer and visionary. He was convincing to the people around him of the importance of a job done right the first time. Those are the people he would hire at Kokosing. As of today, Kokosing employs over 4,000 people.

Through industry association involvement, Mr. Burgett was a leader in educating government officials on programs that created useful, productive construction projects. On numerous occasions, Mr. Burgett spoke with members of U. S. Congress and State Legislators, taking every opportunity to educate people on our nation's crumbling infrastructure and how to repair it.

Mr. Burgett was excellent in maintaining all equipment at Kokosing. Under his leadership, along with like-minded employees, Kokosing has always been a pioneer in inventing and building job specific equipment. Over the years, equipment manufacturers valued Mr. Burgett's opinion and input on development of new equipment.

Mr. Burgett was a respected negotiator. One of his most memorable contributions to the construction industry in Ohio was when he became involved in a game changing union labor negotiation. In the years following, Mr. Burgett was known for the compromises in labor negotiations that created a healthy balance between management and union.

Mr. Burgett was able to established a scholarship fund that has awarded over 400 scholarships to students in pursuit of a civil engineering degree.

Throughout Mr. Burgett's life, he believed in giving back to his community, as evidenced by his leadership in building the Fredericktown Community Library, the Waterford Church Family Life Center, Sockman Lake, the Fredericktown Gazebo, Hospice of Knox County and many other local

community projects. As some may know, I am a bowler and he built our local bowling alley, Trio Lanes, which is still being used today. One of the only bowling alleys in Ohio with wood lanes.

Mr. Burgett served on many boards throughout Knox County and Ohio, such as the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Knox County Area Development Committee and the United Way of Knox County. He was given the highest honor of the Free Mason and was awarded the Thirty-third Degree for outstanding service.

Mr. Burgett was not all work and volunteering. He did enjoy traveling with his wife Shirley (who is still alive), working in his wood shop and taking pictures. He was also interested in horses and in the mid 1990's, he purchased Clydesdales. At one point, he owned 20 Clydesdales and showed at many state fairs. He would host trail rides, of which, was one of my personal passions and I rode with him many times.

In recent years, Mr. Burgett found out he had Parkinson's disease and learned from his doctor that the best way to delay the disease was through exercise. Never one to shy away from a challenge, he chose a proactive approach to the disease and started a Parkinson's exercise and support group at the Waterford United Methodist Church.

Mr. Burgett did pass away from the disease on November 25, 2015, but he leaves his wife, Shirley and three of the five children to run the businesses and to take his place in many organizations.

It would mean so much to this hard-working family to ask that the State of Ohio place a sign and designate Ohio State Route 13, through Knox County as it runs past his founding company, Kokosing Construction Company.

I am asking for your support and passage of House Bill 330.

I will be glad to answer any questions this committee would have.

Margaret Ann Ruhl,

Past Ohio State Representative