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House Veterans and Military Committee
Written-Proponent Testimony
House Bill 2088
Scott J. Schneider

Chairman Ellis and committee members, I am Scott Schneider and I am here as a citizen of Kansas, representing myself. I support plans to honor the 1st Kansas (Colored) Voluntary Infantry regiment because it is a uniquely Kansas story that deserves to be told and retold. In no other State was the fight against slavery and struggle for everyone's freedom as acute as in Kansas. The statehood of Kansas sparked into action what good and decent people already knew — all people are made in the image of our creator and should be recognized as having equal individual dignity and purpose.

I am aware this issue has been around the Statehouse for several years. However, it wasn't until I was researching the first Lutheran Pastor in Kansas, Reverend Josiah McAfee, that I realized how intertwined many Kansas histories were and how the 1st Kansas (Colored) Voluntary Infantry was a uniquely Kansas story.

First a little on Josiah McAfee. When he and his wife and daughter got off the riverboat in Leavenworth on the 15th of April, 1855, he was interviewed by the "rank pro-slavery newspaper" called the Leavenworth Herald, as to their position on slavery. Subsequently, he was approached by a group of Missouri ruffians and told to preach on the subject, "Slavery is a divine institution and ordained by God." He refused and told them he would rather preach on why the Devil remains an angel. He was peremptory notified to "leave town or hang." He did neither.

His story is intertwined with this legislation because of his service. On September 1, 1862, Reverend McAfee enlisted as a private in the Eleventh Regiment, Kansas Volunteer Infantry (later Cavalry), and was elected first lieutenant of the company on September 16. He participated in several battles from 1862 to 1864 served in various leadership capacities, as lieutenant, chaplain, and superintendent of the refugees at Fort Smith. Sergeant Major Jeremy Byers, the Kansas National Guard Historian, provided me a written briefing on McAfee last fall that stated,

"On November 6, 1863 he was appointed chaplain of the Second Regiment, Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry (and the follow on unit – the 83rd US Colored Infantry Regiment), and served with that regiment until March, 1864, when he was assigned for duty as post chaplain at Fort Smith and superintendent of refugees, where he had much arduous labor to perform, and



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during which time be shipped several thousand refugees from that point, some by steamer and some by train, to Kansas. On January 16, 1865, Reverend McAfee resigned as chaplain and superintendent of refugees to accept the position of private secretary to Col. S. J. Crawford, who had just been elected governor of Kansas.”

Many historical documents have faded away in battles, fires and storms. A Lutheran Historical Committee captured several first-hand harrowing stories of how the struggles of the Kansas moment and how they troubled a man’s conscience and tended to “unchristianize” many because it was so terribly difficult. They persevered. It’s written the these regiments were mustered without federal authorization but a total of four companies were compiled. The 1st Kansas (Colored) Voluntary Infantry and the 2nd is what brought the underground railroad above ground and defending it grit, guns and their lives. The soldiers’ story are more than the valor of slowing being killed at the Alamo. The 1st Kansas (Colored) Voluntary Infantry fought for an idea that continues to this day. The first Kansans gave up nearly everything, moved thousand of southern refugees into the State and stood for the integrity and dignity of people. It’s a story worth telling and retelling. HB 2088 should pass and Kansas should be proud of those who sacrificed to found our State in decency.