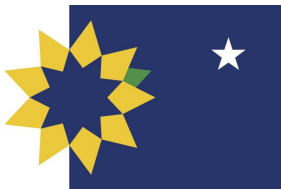


Topeka License Plate Testimony

Introduction:

Hi everybody, I'm so excited to be here today! My name is Braden Werner and I am a lifelong Topekan. My wife and I live in North Topeka and are raising two children who will, one day, attend Seaman Schools. Currently, I am a social studies teacher at Shawnee Heights High School – I teach Government as well as World History and Sociology. I'm pretty excited to tell my students about my experience testifying before you today. As a Government teacher, I often emphasize the importance of being politically involved. I urge my students to contact their local representatives to push for change if something is important to them. As a local Topekan, this license plate initiative is important to me and I am grateful that you have brought me here today to talk about it.

Topeka Flag Meaning:



As I'm sure most of you know, our Topeka flag was redesigned in 2019. With the redesign, came rich new meaning and symbolism. Although I don't have time to discuss it all, I'll share some of my favorite aspects of this new flag.

First, the sunflower in the middle is the color gold to reflect Topeka's nickname, "The Golden City." Its nine petals represent the nine founders of Topeka, which is a meaningful tribute to our city's history.

Next, the star. It highlights the geographic location of Topeka within the State of Kansas and is the color white. White often symbolizes goodness, purity, and peace. This white star represents Topeka as a community fighting for a more just society.

Finally, the green arrow pointing toward the star has a beautiful dual meaning. First, this green arrow points toward the star, just as Ad Astra, the Native American perched atop the capitol building points his arrow toward the North Star. By paying tribute to this Native American, Ad Astra, the Topeka flag also honors the Kansas motto: "Ad Astra Per Aspera," or "To the stars through difficulty." Our city has made great progress and has played a significant role in the history of both our state and our nation. From the city's inception during the Civil War, to the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision during the Civil Rights Movement, to all the progress that Topeka is making today.

Senate Bill no. 229:

Topeka is such a wonderful city. As somebody who has lived in Topeka my entire life, it has been exciting to see Topeka grow and develop – from Downtown Topeka, to NOTO, and beyond. Topeka is the perfect place to raise a family and I could not be more proud to live here.

This piece of legislation is an important step to continue the progress our city has been making these past several years. It may seem simple, but seeing the Topeka flag on a license plate can help build civic pride, spark curiosity about the city of Topeka in the minds of onlookers, and make Topeka a more desirable place to live. You may know that Kansas already has a distinctive license plate for the Flag of Wichita. I was first introduced to this flag when I saw it on a license plate and was then prompted to research, read, and learn about not only the flag, but the city of Wichita as well. Through this process, I learned that the Flag of Wichita

represents freedom, happiness, contentment, and home. I also learned that the revenue generated by the distinctive license plate is used to fund the Wichita Parks Foundation and supports park projects around the city.

I want all of this and more for the city of Topeka. I want onlookers to see the beautiful Topeka flag on my license plate and wonder to themselves, "Where is that flag from?" I want others to be inspired to learn about the city of Topeka, its flag, and its rich history. Finally, I want the revenue from these license plates to go to a noble project that will work to make Topeka even better than it already is. I, for one, will be the first to sign up.

Thank you's and acknowledgements:

In closing, I want to thank you all for allowing me the time to share my thoughts. I want to thank Senator Kristin O'Shea for inviting me to testify and for making this bill a priority. I want to thank Representative Fred Patton for advocating for this initiative as well, and for putting up with my several emails over the past 18 months. Finally, I want to thank the other members of the Kansas State House and Senate who responded to me when I reached out and helped advocate for this Bill: Rep. John Alcala, Sen. Brenda Dietrich, and Rep. Vic Miller, as well as Mr. Curtis Sneden at the Greater Topeka Partnership. Thank you.