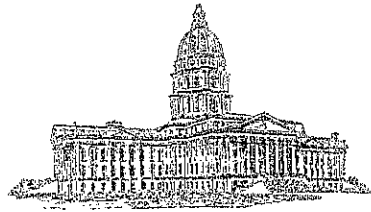


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HB 2614  
February 14, 2012

Chairman Hayzlett and Committee Members:

I appear today in support of HB 2614 which will designate the junction of Interstate 70 and US Highway 183 as the Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bryan J. Nichols Fallen Veterans Memorial Interchange.

Bryan was a native of Hays, Kansas who always loved to fly and who followed his father, First Sergeant Doug Nichols, into Army service. Doug himself was a decorated combat medic in Vietnam.

Bryan had done several tours in the combat zone in both Iraq and in Afghanistan. He was a CH47 "Chinook" pilot – a Reservist from a unit in Olathe, who had already flown many missions. Only a month or so before the fateful crash, he was flying another mission when his Chinook went down. Although little was released of that downing, a survivor who was in that crash and attended Bryan's funeral on crutches from injuries, said that Bryan's actions saved lives as he cared for the wounded throughout the night until they were rescued. He said that Bryan was the last to leave.

Bryan was called into service again on that fateful morning on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August – this time to fly an important mission to take Navy Seals into a valley to cut off enemy combatants who were fleeing from the area. As Bryan's father tells the story, he was flying into a valley near the drop off zone when a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) was fired from a house on the hillside and hit the Chinook. It went down immediately and all on the chopper were killed. The crew, five members of a Kansas Reserve unit, was killed that fateful day, along with 25 others – many of them Navy Seals. It was the largest loss of life in a single day during the decade long war.

You will notice that this sign carries Bryan's name, but it also honors all Fallen Veterans. Signs are symbols, reminders, memorials, and even testimonies. Bryan's story is a local story but it also carries much national significance.

Thank you for recognizing their service and their sacrifice.

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