

Legislative Testimony Senate Bill 330

Good morning, my name is Perry Wiggins and I am the Executive Director, Governor's Military Council, State of Kansas. I want to thank the Chairman and the Committee for the opportunity to testify and advocate for Senate Bill 330. A bill that establishes a monument on the statehouse grounds in honor of those Gold Star families who sacrificed a loved one for our liberties and freedoms. The establishment of this monument would rectify Kansas being one of the few remaining states without a memorial monument that honors Gold Star Families on its statehouse grounds.

The bill states that the monument will be procured through the use of private funding and that no government/state funds will be provided. The bill also designates the creation of an account at the State Treasury Department for private donations. I have met with Frank Burnam, Director, Office of Facilities and Property Management and a site situated within the existing Veteran's Walkway on the statehouse grounds (diagram attached) has been approved.

I have had the distinct honor and privilege to wear the cloth of a United States Army Officer in service to this nation for 33 years. I have witnessed first hand this nation's most precious resource, its sons and daughters standing on point willing to sacrifice their lives to protect our very way of life. Sadly, as a commander I have had to knock on a door to deliver the tragic news of a fallen loved one and have executed one of our nation's most sacred duties and honored a fallen comrade by presenting a loved one on bended knee our nation's folded flag on behalf of a grateful nation. It was through these types of experiences that I gained a true realization and appreciation for the incredible debt we owe our families of the fallen. A debt the nation will never truly be able to repay.

Throughout history the Great Citizens of the State of Kansas have answered the call and proudly served in defense of the nation. During World War I many families throughout the state displayed small banners with blue stars in the windows of their homes to identify an immediate family member serving in the armed forces. If their service member died in service, the family replaced the blue star with a gold star. This gold star not only signaled a great loss and sacrifice but also enabled communities to wrap their arms around these families and provide support and comfort.

In conclusion, no service member from the State of Kansas served alone. Family members served alongside those who went into harm's way. Kansas still has Gold Star families from World War I, and many from World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. Just as Kansans did throughout communities in our state during War World I it is our moral obligation to recognize and support our Gold Star Families today. This Gold Star Memorial Monument will symbolize the grateful citizens of Kansas wrapping their arms around and honoring the Gold Star Families who sacrificed a loved one for our liberties and freedom.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 330. I look forward to any questions you might have.

