

March 23, 2021

The Honorable Richard Proehl, Chairperson
House Committee on Transportation
Statehouse, Room 582-N
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: HB2247 – Dennis M. Wilson Memorial Highway

Dear Representative Proehl:

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the House Transportation Committee, Staff, & Guests; My name is Dave Lindstrom and I am pleased to appear before you this morning and I am proud; and I am honored to have this opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of my very good friend, former Senator Dennis Wilson.

Many of you knew Dennis and served side by side with him right here in this beautiful Capital Building. For you, I hope my comments and the supporting testimony elicit fond memories of your experiences with a remarkable man. For those of you who did not know Senator Wilson, I hope to adequately convey to you his true character as well as his love and devotion to the State of Kansas.

It was truly my privilege to have known Dennis Wilson for more than forty years and to have been one of his 10 thousand closest friends.

Dennis Wilson was a man who had his priorities in order; but more importantly, he had the courage and the integrity to allow those priorities to have consequences in his life. He identified his core values and then he worked to align his life and his daily behavior with those ideals.

Although private about his personal life; Dennis often expressed to me his pride, appreciation and sincere gratitude of God's blessings to him. At the top of that list was his marriage to Vickie; his wife and partner of forty-seven years. Next was his daughter, Krista, and her husband, Nate, who subsequently created the secret weapon that finally cracked Dennis's renown and impenetrable sensitivity shell. And that weapon was his amazing 6-year-old grandson, Roman. Dennis Wilson deeply loved his family.

Dennis was a hardworking, sincere, competitive and a self-made overachiever. He was practical, honest, professional, generous, reliable and he was tough. He loved to laugh and he loved to have fun. He was a straightshooter who held himself, as well as others, including his family, his friends and his colleagues, to account.

It has been said that; "Accountability is the glue that ties commitment to the result." Dennis Wilson's life exemplified accountability.

Dennis was a businessman who began his career at a very early age. When he set out on his own; at best, he was a long shot to succeed. And, that was because he lacked the three supposed; essential business measurables. - he had no business degree or training; he had no business experience; and he had no money. But, nevertheless, Dennis had a dream to make his life better and just as important;

he had the passion, the determination, the willingness and the courage necessary to make his dream of success become a reality.

At the extraordinary age of 17, Dennis moved out of his parent's home and went to work for the legendary and iconic automobile dealer Cecil Van Tuyl. That is where Dennis was mentored by the founder of the largest privately owned automobile dealership group in the nation. That is where Dennis learned, literally and figuratively, to "Sell the Car." "Sell the Car" was Dennis's "Euphemism" that allowed him to swallow his pride and do what it takes to get things done. And that applied to equally to politics as it did to business

Dennis was a quick study and because he had an incredible work ethic. At the age of 29; he purchased his first of many automobile dealerships. Two short years later, (at the age of 31), Dennis's Royal Chevrolet was recognized as the number one small market Chevrolet dealer in the Country. As you could imagine, Dennis was honored and so very proud to receive his award on a national stage. He was especially appreciative to receive this recognition with the winner of the number one large market Chevrolet dealer in the country; his mentor and the man who taught him to "Sell the Car", Cecil Van Tuyl.

Over the years, the baton was passed and Dennis became a mentor himself. He relished the opportunity to help his friends and associates wherever and whenever the opportunity presented itself. With experience as an owner and partner in five dealerships, an insurance agency and several banks; Dennis now had the essential measurables to assist, advise, develop and even invest in other businesses. From popcorn, to batteries, to window washing, to pro sports marketing; it was tremendously satisfying for Dennis to take on new challenges and to contribute to the successful launch and turnaround of a business. And, Dennis had a truly remarkable record of doing just that.

Dennis' successes, in large part, was due to his association with good people. But he was also willing to take a risk and he regularly called it as he saw it. His blessing and his curse was an intimidating reputation to be direct and perhaps even blunt in his assessments. And, I can attest that those assessments applied to both friends and foes.

As notable as his record of success; was the fact that when his business goals were accomplished and partnerships concluded; Dennis remained good friends with his cohorts. When I started my business, I often leaned on Dennis's wisdom and I quickly adopted his simple and truly profound doctrine, which not only applied to business, but also, to political and everyday life. When faced with an opportunity, a challenge or a decision, Dennis had to check all three of these boxes: "Is it Legal; Is it Moral; Is it ETHICAL?"

Dennis grew up in Kansas City and he loved everything Chiefs. He was a leader of the Red Coaters; an exclusive club established to promote and support the Chiefs. Membership was predicated on selling fifty season tickets. And, members were rewarded by traveling with the team on away games and being down on the playing field before home games. Dennis was inducted into the Red Coat Hall of Fame in recognition of his twenty plus years of service, his leadership as Vice President and by selling fifty season tickets; in 1day!

Dennis Wilson was a Patriot and proud citizen of a nation that will not forget those who gave their service and made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. He was born in Missouri, but his roots and

his pride ran deep in Kansas. He fondly spoke of his great grandfather who was one of the original settlers and founders of Dodge City, Kansas. When the Veteran returned from serving four years in the US Air Force; Dennis moved to the Sunflower State, where he met his bride, resumed his business career and furthered his commitment to public service.

Dennis has an amazing political resume. He began winning elections in Kansas, thirty-five years ago when he became a Precinct Committeeperson in Overland Park. Dennis was elected to serve the 29th District as it's Kansas State Representative. Dennis was elected to serve the newly created 37th District as its first Kansas State Senator. Dennis was Johnson County's last elected Treasurer, where he was credited with solving the never-ending problems and troublesome delays at the Johnson County Department of Motor Vehicles. Dennis was the Kansas Director of Unclaimed Property for the State Treasurers' office. Dennis was the Kansas Director of the Lottery. Dennis was elected to the Johnson County Water #1 Board. And, on two occasions Dennis ran for Statewide office;

1. He was a candidate for Lieutenant Governor as Robin Jennison's running mate, and
2. He was a candidate for Kansas State Treasurer.

Although Dennis was direct and stringent in his political views, he was admired and respected by republicans and democrats alike because he was consistently fair, honest and fun to be with.

In closing, Dennis unabashedly was a Kansan and he held closely the traditions of the people who live and work here in the Heartland. He was so proud of our State Highway system and truly believed that it was the backbone of our Kansas economy. In 2005, Senator Wilson was tremendously honored to carry the bill which recognized and named a portion of K10 after his friend and the former Governor John Anderson Jr. He was elated to know that travelers along this this busy Roadway would be forever reminded of a humble man who patriotically served our State as its Governor. Never would he have imagined the irony that that a mere 16 years later; in this the 2021 Kansas Legislative Session, that his colleagues in the State House would be taking testimony on his behalf with this HB2247.

Appropriately, the proposed portion of US 69 Highway denoted in HB2247 is located well within the districts that Dennis represented in both the Kansas House and the Senate.

Because of his dedication and service to our Country; because of his statesmanship, his passion for and service to our State and local communities; because of his genuine devotion to his family, friends and colleagues; because of his unbridled enthusiasm and consistent adherence to the high standards of respect and diplomacy; And, because it would be a fitting tribute to recognize Senator Dennis Wilson for his numerous and impactful accomplishments; I respectfully request the Committee's support of HB2247.

Thank you for your service to Kansas.

Sincerely,

Dave Lindstrom