

## MINUTES OF THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Gary Hayzlett at 1:30 P.M. on February 12, 2008 in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Barbara Ballard- excused  
Representative Tom Sloan- excused

Committee staff present:

Hank Avila, Kansas Legislative Research  
Bruce Kinzie, Revisor of Statutes Office  
Mike Carrigan, Revisor of Statutes Office  
Betty Boaz, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Jason Watkins  
Representative Ted Powers  
Anita Foster  
Betty Jean Pulliam, Past National President of the American Gold Star Mothers  
Carmen Alldritt, Director, Motor Vehicle Div., Dept. of Revenue  
Charles Yunker, State Adjutant, American Legion  
Terry Houck, American Legions Riders Post #136  
Rick Babinger, Commander, American Legion  
Steve McDonald, American Legion Riders Post  
Karen Funcheon, Mother of Fallen Soldier

Others attending:

See attached list.

Chairman Hayzlett called the meeting to order and opened hearings..

**HB 2691 - Gold star family license plates.**

The Chairman recognized Representative Jason Watkins who explained the bill. According to Representative Watkins the Gold Star Family License Plates bill provides recognition of the sacrifice made for our country by a person who has died while on active duty in military service. Representative Watkins said this bill waives the normal \$10,000 fee for introducing a specialized license plate and also removes the requirements of a minimum number of tags being requested. Representative Watkins introduced Anita Foster.

Mrs. Foster lost her son, Sgt. Evan S. Parker on October 26, 2005. According to Mrs. Foster the Gold Star represents the soldier's ultimate sacrifice for his country and these license plates would recognize and honor the service and sacrifice of loved ones. (Attachment #1) She said at the present time 13 states recognize the National Gold Star License Plate and would like to see Kansas become the 14<sup>th</sup>. The plates would not be just for those who died in Iraq but for all soldiers who lost their lives while on active duty in the military service..

The Chairman recognized Betty Jean Pulliam who was the Past National President of the American Gold Star Mothers. (Attachment #2) She was also the first lady from Kansas to achieve this honor. According to Mrs. Pulliam her son was killed in action in Viet Nam on May 14, 1967. She received the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion from the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation. She said the Bronze Medallion is the second highest award given and is granted for extraordinary contributions to the welfare of others at the national or world level. Mrs. Pulliam asked the Committee to support **HB 2691**. She ended her testimony with the question "We gave our sons and daughters for your freedom; could you give us a license plate for our car?"

The Chairman asked if there were any other proponents to this bill. Representative Watkins came back to the podium to introduce Sgt. Parkers's grandmother, Opal Dunlap.

The Chairman asked if there were any opponents to **HB 2691**. There were none.

The Chairman recognized Carmen Alldritt (no written testimony provided). She said she had talked to Mrs.

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Transportation Committee at 1:30 P.M. on February 12, 2008 in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

Foster about the fact there were no Gold Star Family plates in Kansas. She asked for the Committee's direction in this matter. She said the reason other states could provide a variety of plates was because they used flat-plate lazer technology and Kansas uses embossed aluminum. She said a major problem was how to decide who the folks are who are eligible for the Gold Star Family plates.

The Chairman told Director Alldritt it would be the Committee's desire to sit down and work with her on these problems when they were ready to work the bill.

There was written testimony submitted by Representative Pat Colloton.

There being no other proponents and no opponents, Chairman Hayzlett closed the hearing on **HB 2691**.

### **HB 2708 - Designating K-53 highway as the patriot guard highway.**

Chairman Hayzlett recognized Representative Ted Powers. (Attachment #3) Representative Powers said the Patriot Guards is a support group which supports the decency of our military and the people they serve. He provided a map showing a six-mile stretch that starts at Highway 81 and runs through Mulvane and ends at K-15. Representative Powers pointed out Post #136, which is where the Patriot Guard movement was born. He finished his testimony by reading a poem written by a patriot guard member, Rick Babinger.

The Chairman introduced Charles Yunker, Department Adjutant of the American Legion Department of Kansas. (Attachment #4) He said the American Legion feels it is very fitting that this bill was introduced as a means to honor those thousands of Kansas citizens who have become a part of the Patriot Guard by helping to pay tribute to their fellow citizens who have lost their lives in defense of our nation and its policies. Adjutant Yunker explained that the Patriot Guard is an independent organization whose mission is to honor those who have served this nation. Adjutant Yunker concluded by asking for the Committee's support of **HB 2708**.

Chairman Hayzlett recognized Terry Houck, American Legion Riders Chapter 136 Veterans Affairs Coordinator, Mulvane, Kansas. (Attachment #5) Mr. Houck is the co-founder of the Patriot Guard mission and the Captain of the Kansas Patriot Guard. He said the Patriot Guard was created in July 2005 and their mission plan is to ride to the military funerals to show honor and respect to our country's fallen heroes, their families, and their communities. He said the Patriot Guard uses American flags to provide a shield at the church funeral services and a perimeter around the cemetery service, secondary to the military paying their respect and honor. Mr. Houck said at American Legion Post 136 in Mulvane they have a large memorial stone made from bricks with the bricks being engraved with the name of a fallen hero. He concluded by asking for support in the naming of Highway 53 the "Patriot Guard Highway."

The next proponent recognized was Rick Babinger, Commander of Mulvane American Legion Post 136 in Mulvane, Kansas. (Attachment #6) He said approximately one half of one percent of our population serves on active duty in our military. Commander Babinger said when one of those few are lost, the Patriot Guard feel it absolutely necessary to honor that service and assure no disgrace falls upon them. He said a few years ago they became aware that there were people in this country and even in our State who were willing to disgrace the service of the fallen and defile our flag. Commander Babinger concluded by saying that one way to assure the immortality of the Patriot Guard is through the passage of **HB 2708** and name a section of Highway 53 after them. He said it would be very fitting for all who come to Mulvane, the "Birthplace of the Patriot Guard", to enter on the Patriot Guard Memorial Highway.

Steve McDonald was the next proponent to speak. (Attachment #7) Mr. McDonald is a resident of Derby, Ks and a co-director of an American Legion Riders group. He said as Viet Nam veterans they were not well received when they returned from their tour of duty. In 2005 they heard about fallen soldiers having protesters at their funerals so Terry Houck got several riders together to form the Patriot Guard because they wanted the families of the fallen soldiers to know that there is support from the American Legion Riders out there for them. He concluded by saying the City of Mulvane is where it all started and it would appropriate for the highway leading into Mulvane to be named Kansas Patriot Guard.

The next proponent was Karen Funcheon, mother of a son killed in Baghdad. (Attachment #8) She said three

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Transportation Committee at 1:30 P.M. on February 12, 2008 in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

days after their son was killed 30 men and women on motorcycles came to their home to embrace them in their pain and grief. When their son came home there were 75 Patriot Guard standing at attention to honor their fallen son. On the day of the funeral over 250 were present to give their son, Alex, the honor he and every soldier deserves.

Chairman Hayzlett asked if there were other proponents. Major General Todd Bunting came forward to give support to **HB 2708**. He said where the Patriot Guard was, he would be there also. He was definitely in support of naming a section of Highway 53 for the Patriot Guards.

There were no other proponents and no opponents. Chairman Hayzlett closed the hearing on **HB 2708**.

According to Chairman Hayzlett, in past years Chairmen were advised not to work bills the same day they were heard.. However since this bill had no opponents nor did it need alterations, it was his desire to work **HB 2708**. A motion was made by Representative Wetta to pass this bill favorably from Committee, seconded by Representative Burgess. After some discussion Representative Wetta amended his motion to pass this bill favorably and place it on the consent calendar, seconded by Representative Burgess. Representative Henry made the suggestion that the bill go before the House so everyone could hear the explanation of the Patriot Guard. Representative Wetta further amended his motion to pass **HB 2708** favorably to the full House, seconded by Representative Burgess and the motion carried.

It was also the Chair's desire to work **HB 2659**. Representative Vickrey made a motion to pass favorably **HB 2659**, seconded by Representative McLachlan and the motion carried.

The Chairman announced the tour of the Santa Fe maintenance shop is going to be on March 5, at 1:30 p.m. Transportation will not be provided for the members.

Chairman Hayzlett advised the Committee that Minutes would be e-mailed for review and approval.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be February 14, 2008, at 1:30 p.m. in Room 519-S.