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Honorable Rep. Richard Proehl Chair
Transportation Committee-Kansas House of Representatives

Dear Transportation Committee:

It is with great respect that I write in support of the pending legislation HB2476, "Providing for the silver star and bronze star distinctive license plates." I was just a young non-com in the Kansas National Guard in Kansas City, Kansas in the late 1960's when my entire unit was activated and directed to the Vietnam War. As with so many other soldiers I was not prepared for what I would experience during my year long tour of duty as a combat soldier.

Eventually I would serve as the staff sergeant for a squad known as the "Road Runners." Our official designation was Army 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry, 4th Division, (Golden Dragons). We engaged the enemy on a daily basis in the northern highlands of South Vietnam gathering intelligence and protecting convoys. It was a grueling and dangerous assignment, highlighted by the Battle of Landing Zone St. George in 1969, one of the more deadly and treacherous battles of the early war. Later I would be surprised to learn I was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor for my actions in this attack where we were over run.

When we returned home the members of my squad were one of the more highly decorated units for their bravery and dedication to what they were asked to do by the government in the Vietnam War. Unfortunately, the reception back in the United States in 1969 was less than friendly and many of us simply kept quiet about our sacrifices and service. It was a hard pill to swallow.

As time has healed some of the wounds, my squad continues to meet each year for reunions at various sites across the country. Every one of my squad has some sort of commemorative license plates from different states denoting purple hearts, Vietnam veterans, and bronze stars. It is a form of healing and pride in our nation. Because I now reside in Texas I proudly display my Bronze Star plate which in Texas is a life time issue.

It is time to provide these distinctive plates to our many heroes from Kansas, with more than just a little sticker. It is the least we can do for the great men and women of Kansas who have given so much to honor their state and nation.

Sincerely,

Command Sgt. Major Larry Joe Powell (Ret.)



Personal plate of Larry Joe Powell, former Kansas resident.



Larry Joe Powell visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial