

DATE: February 1, 2018

TO: Chair Mike Peterson and Senate Transportation Committee

FROM: Patrick Hewitt, The American Legion, Department of Kansas, Sixth District Commander

RE: Testimony in support of SB 291

Chairman Peterson and Transportation Committee members, thank you for this opportunity allowing The American Legion, Department of Kansas, Sixth District to provide testimony in support of SB 291.

I am the Sixth District Commander of The American Legion, Department of Kansas which encompasses several northcentral and northwestern Kansas counties and the 2,537 Legionnaires who live and work there.

World War I is the event which caused The American Legion's creation in 1919 and we will soon celebrate our centennial anniversary as well as the centennial of the end of The Great War. It was a group of war weary veterans who met in France in 1919 that formed The American Legion and pushed for our organization to become a congressionally chartered veteran's service organization which has grown to over two million members worldwide.

As you are aware, in 2006, US Highway 36 within the boundaries of Smith County was designated the World War I memorial highway. This came about, I believe, when Smith County realized they had the last and oldest Kansas World War I veteran living in their county. Their intent wasn't to just honor him, but to also honor the more than one million Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines, including approximately 5,200 Kansans veterans.

We'd appreciate the current designation be expanded from its now 30 miles of highway to the proposed 270 miles which would run from the west city limit of Washington west and continue west to the Colorado state line. Veterans of World War I contributed substantially to shape the United States we know it today and we feel their contribution should be honored with a more substantial route. We request the committee pass SB 291 out to the full Senate for approval.