

Testimony on House Bill 2070
Senate Transportation Committee

Presented by
Mary Morrison
Seaman High School

Good afternoon Chairman Petersen and members of the Senate Transportation Committee. My name is Mary Morrison. I would like to begin with a story about an incredible woman that John Armstrong aided while working on the Underground Railroad. Ann Clarke was an African American slave in Lecompton. Knowing that her life could be better elsewhere she ran away, only to shortly be returned by pro-slavery men looking to exchange her life for a financial reward. Shortly after these occurrences, she escaped at night and hid in a ravine until the next morning. She remembered that the men around her were drunk yet the women were eyeing her heavily. Regardless, she took her chances and yet again ran away. Ann walked down a dirt path until she ran into one of her master's neighbors, a man well known around the community as Dr. Barker. She, again, took a chance and approached Dr. Barker, hoping he would not return her to slavery. He brought her to his home, where she stayed for six weeks. On that sixth week, she was introduced to a man by the name of John Armstrong. John Armstrong was a conductor of the Underground Railroad in Topeka and to this

day it is unknown exactly how many people he delivered from slavery. Ann's story was recorded and shared by John Armstrong. He mentions that they left sometime in early February 1857. One hundred and sixty two years ago, a woman's life was changed because of the actions of John Armstrong. According to his own accounts she was released in Civil Bend, Iowa and went on to have children in Lawrence County, Missouri while also maintaining a friendship with John and regularly sent him mail. John Armstrong's courage and bravery saved this woman's life and ultimately resulted in one of the most well known stories of a slave escaping through the underground railroad system, in Kansas. Thank you for your time.

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Presented by
Connor Bryant
Seaman High School

Good afternoon Chairman Petersen and member of the Senate Transportation Committee. My name is Connor Bryant and I believe that you should consider passage of House Bill 2070 because John Armstrong's patriotism and loyalty to the Union in the Civil War, a defining moment in Kansas History.

The same conflicts that sparked the Civil War are inseparably bound to the creation of Kansas. This conflict created the push for Kansas to become a separate state from the territories around it, and additionally allowed Topeka to emerge as the designated capital of the state.

Passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the doctrine of Popular Sovereignty, led to ruthless guerrilla combat that would later become known as Bleeding Kansas. Through this event, a race to create the state constitution began, with border ruffians pushing for a pro-slavery constitution while abolitionists and free

stated supported a an anti-slavery constitution. The first constitution emerged from Lecompton Kansas, where a series of legal documents were created in an attempt to ban any attempts to limit slavery, as well as banning anti-slavery views. In response, some people worked to launch a free state government out of the city of Topeka. This struggle would continue until the creation of the Wyandotte Constitution in 1859. Kansas entered the Union January 29, 1861 a few months prior to the start of the Civil War.

Within a few years, the struggle in Kansas, and the conflicts resulting from it, led to the beginning of the Civil War. Kansas offered 20,000 out of it's 30,000 able bodied men in order to defend the unity of the country. The results of the war are still felt today, and while he was just one of the thousands, John Armstrong should be immortalized to represent his, and others', deeds through this bill.

Thank you for your time.