

RE: SrA Derek Scott Martin Memorial Bridge

Dear Mr. Rhiley,

I am writing to you on behalf of my husband, Mark, and myself, regarding the proposed designation of a Kansas bridge in Sumner County as the SrA Derek Scott Martin Memorial Bridge.

As was Derek, we are native Kansans with deep roots both in family and friends in our home state. After meeting and marrying in my hometown of Dodge City, KS, we moved to my husband's hometown of Wellington, KS to open a business and raise our son. Our son and Derek were in the same class and went to school together.

We could tell you all about Derek from Kindergarten to his high school graduation party in his back yard to my messages and phone visits with him after he left the military. In fact, I still have a grade school drawing Derek gave me that I kept in my bible to remind me to pray for him when I would come across it! That drawing remains in my bible, reminding me now when I turn a page to it, to pray for Derek's kids.

However, I feel it is equally important to convey the significance of a bridge in Derek's name to Sumner County and his hometown of Wellington because of what I call the 'heartland heart' that is instilled in us growing up as Kansans; which is that all of our Kansas service men and women become all of our sons and daughters. Kansas is Derek's home and Kansas is the heartland of America, known for holding great honor for our service men and women who have given their lives to protect and serve our country. Derek's hometown of Wellington is the county seat of Sumner County and is well known across the state for its honor shown to our service men and women. One such show of respect and gratitude is the Wellington community's volunteerism to ready the breathtaking Avenue of Flags displayed at the cemetery for Memorial Day. With just a simple news notification of the day, the community shows up en masse, and the beauty of multitudes of American flags, each flag and name plate placed to represent every Wellington military service person, all waving in the Kansas Spring breeze together becomes a collective memorial honoring all. When Derek's mother, Paula, asked us to write to you on behalf of Derek, we didn't hesitate to accept the invitation knowing that an opportunity to create a legacy such as a memorial bridge for one of our own Kansas sons is a privilege we, nor any other Wellington or Sumner County Kansan would never dismiss.

To this day, Mark and I feel privileged that we were able to raise our son in our Kansas hometown, with all of the benefits that only a small town gives to those who grow up in one- from knowing everyone in town to an ingrained, revered respect for our country and the men and women serving our country in the military. The sacrifice and loss of Derek doesn't leave us, but our pride in his service to our country also gives solace. A designation of a memorial bridge in Sumner County in Derek's name would be a legacy that would honor not only Derek, but also represent all Kansans who have served and given their lives to protect our USA.

Thank you for your request. It is an honor and privilege to get to write this letter of recommendation on Derek's behalf.

Regards,

Mark and Marti McLeod