

Cynthia Luchko - HB 2507

To whom this may concern on the committee:

Hello, my name is Cynthia Luchko. I am a Gold Star Mom. I share the sorrow and heartache with Paula Coffman, who I have gotten to know through several military groups we are in. Paula and I had formed a friendship from missing our sons who so bravely served our country. My son Josh was 19 when he went to heaven. Derek, Paula's only son passed away as one of the 22 around the same time I lost my son Josh.

Paula and I have spoken at great lengths. Unlike my son, Josh, her son Derek was deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. Derek saw some things you can't recover from in my understanding. Paula, his mom, has been very candid in discussing both Derek's childhood as well as his adult hood and the 3 children he left behind. Paula is very active in a group that I am in for military families. We are not just Gold Star Families, but I can tell you this, everyone recognizes Derek's calm, handsome face with his blue eyes and smile that could light up a room.

Derek was a senior Airman, and I am thankful for his service and sacrifice.

Gold star families and even blue star families are very supportive of Paula. She is her son's voice. She still struggles listening to Metallica, a band Derek, would often listen to. I have a "derek" shirt. It's a Metallica shirt but I think of this airman every time I wear it.

This bridge would mean so much to not only Derek's mom but all of us moms that "have her 6". We would love to see this bridge go in Derek's name as Derek was a fan of the Kansas City chiefs having been near Paula's home state of Kansas for many years and raising her children there.

Derek was an avid golfer and a wonderful human being. Though I never met him he deserves this recognition. Please make this bridge project happen. Not just for Paula. But for Derek and his whole family. He was an upstanding citizen, a veteran and a person that was loved by many.

Barb Baker - HB 2507

By way of introduction, my name is Barbara Baker. I met Paula Coffman through a Facebook site of mothers who lost a child. We instantly had a connection, as we are both from Kansas and both of our boys were in the military.

I had the pleasure of meeting Paula three years ago. She now resides in North Carolina. It was such an honor to travel to North Carolina and meet Paula and be invited to her home to stay overnight. I strongly feel we understand each other, and more so after we both talked about our boys' lives and got to know them.

Derek was enlisted in the Air Force for six years. Thereafter, he attended and graduated from a professional golf school. With a veteran Air Force friend, they cofounded The Rimpact Foundation. It is no surprise since Derek enjoyed interacting with other veterans on the golf course and sharing their military stories.

Motivational speaking was a way of healing, beneficial and therapeutic for him, and more so, while speaking to veteran groups. Reaching out and trying to help others was especially important to him.

Derek's family has chosen the Sumner County Bridge in a way to always remember Derek and keep his memory alive.

Thank you.

Joseph & Carole Goetz Testimony - HB 2507



The Honorable Bill Rhiley
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612
Bill.rhiley@house.ks.gov

January 28, 2024

Dear Representative Rhiley,

This letter is in regards to SrA Derek Martin who served in the United States Air Force. Derek was happiest being with his military brothers and sisters. He was a decorated war veteran and recipient of the prestigious Purple Heart. Combat leaves the deepest wounds and scars; Derek was one of our PTSD casualties. Derek's bucket list included a visit to Navy Seal Matthew Axelson's grave (Lone Survivor). Derek received this high honor because he was in the same kind of battle. It is said you can take the soldier out of the war, but you cannot take the war out of the soldier.

In May 2023, Operation Creekside, along with 22 Too Many, built a custom designed Memorial bench in honor of Derek and delivered it to Derek's mother, the only physical place she had for remembrance and reflection.

I, Joseph Goetz and wife, Carole, wholeheartedly believe SrA Derek Martin is well deserving to have a memorial bridge named in his honor.

Thank you for your consideration,

Joseph and Carole Goetz

Joseph and Carole Goetz
Operation Creekside

CC: Deb Paschall
Deb.paschall@house.ks.gov

Operation Creekside - P.O. Box 1758 - Discovery Bay, California 94505



22 Too Many

The Honorable Bill Rhiley
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

January 28, 2024

Dear Representative Rhiley,

I am writing to ask that you consider dedicating the bridge in Sumner County, Kansas in memory of SrA Derek Scott Martin, USAF. Though I did not know SrA Martin personally, I believe he is worthy of this honor. He served our country in multiple deployments with Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom. For his brave service he was wounded in action and received the Purple Heart. Derek was also scarred with the 'hidden wounds' of war – post traumatic stress. After his active military service in the Air Force, Derek still worked tirelessly to serve others. His goal was to help other veterans who served in combat. He partnered with the Wounded Warrior Project, sharing his story to help others know they were not suffering alone. He also co-founded a nonprofit organization, Rimpact Foundation, whose mission was to bring wounded warriors together in a healing environment centered around community and the game of golf. His time was spent giving lessons and providing funds for golf games and equipment.

Derek also loved his role as a father to his young children. He volunteered at their school and with their sports teams. It would be meaningful for his children to be able to see their dad honored in his hometown by having something tangible dedicated to their father.

Though Derek is due burial with full military honors at a national cemetery, this has not happened due to the timing of his death (during COVID) and family decisions made by his next of kin. His mother and family have no physical place to visit to honor and remember Derek. Please consider dedicating this bridge in his memory to encourage his family who has sacrificed so much.

Thank you,

Keri Jacobs

Keri Jacobs

President and Co-Founder of 22 Too Many, a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

CC: Deb Paschall Deb.paschall@house.ks.gov

Christi Grow - HB 2507

January 29, 2024

Dear Committee members

Good afternoon, my name is Christi Grow, I am Derek Martins' aunt. He grew up very close with my children and the rest of his cousins, as we all lived close by in the Wellington, KS area, and got together often. We have a lot of good memories of the kids playing together on their grandparents farm, helping out at harvest time and at all holidays.

One of our most fond memories of Derek, was when The Patriot Guard Riders, a local Wichita television crew and family, including his grandparents, were all at the Wichita airport to welcome Derek back home to Kansas from his third and final deployment. It was a happy and emotional homecoming and such a wonderful memory! We were all so relieved to have him back home, safe and sound in Kansas.

The Rimpact Foundation, that Derek and a veteran friend co-founded, was beneficial for him in many aspects. Staying connected with others who were also struggling with the effects from being in war was very important to him. And also, to those who he spent his time with and helped.

Derek always enjoyed life and making others laugh, he was the instigator of fun in the family. Having this bridge dedicated in memory of SrA Derek Scott Martin is something that he is very deserving of. Please consider.

Thank you for your time,

Christi Grow

Angel Roman – HB 2507

Derek Martin was a kind and selfless individual. His dedication to "Service Before Self" was evident in not only his oath to the Air Force, but to his actions. Through multiple deployments to various war zones, he was able to find the humanity in individuals. While he may have had his inner demons, he dealt with his bout in PTSD, he still found a way to connect with those even after his duty for his country was over. He coached youth sports and even co-created a non-profit to help with veterans suffering from PTSD. I not only proud to call him a brother in life as my brother-in-law, but also a brother in arms as a member of the United States Air Force.

Sincerely,

Angel G. Roman, TSgt, USAF

Katie Gumfory Testimony - HB 2507

Dear Committee,

I'm Katie Gumfory, Derek's cousin and I am writing you today to request that you consider dedicating the Slate Creek bridge in Derek's name. I grew up alongside of Derek and will always remember him as a caring and fun-loving kid. To this day when I think of Derek, I remember him telling me that I share a birthday with Dennis Rodman, Derek knew all things NBA, especially when it came to the Chiago Bulls. And as we grew up and became adults, my respect for Derek only grew when he joined the military, he had so much passion for his career, it was truly inspirational. In between deployments, Derek spent time with family and even came to my mother's elementary class to talk to them about what it means to serve your county. Not only did Derek spend his life dedicated to our country, he also turned his wounds into good through The Rimpact Foundation that he co-founded that was created to help other veterans who were also struggling from effects from war. The strength it takes to help others while you are also struggling is something I can only admire. Please consider this dedication in Derek's name for our family and for Derek's memory to live on for years to come.

Sincerely,

Katie Gumfory

Melanie Marshall - HB 2507

My name is Melanie Marshall and I am the younger sister of Derek Scott Martin. Derek is a son, father, brother, uncle, and friend to many. As the younger sister, I always looked up to my big brother. Derek was a professional at everything he did in life. He strived to be the best and he was good at it all. Growing up he played baseball, basketball, and golf. So of course, I wanted to play baseball, basketball, and golf. Though, I quickly realized Derek was the one good at sports, and I was just the little sister that wanted to be just like him. Honestly, some of the best childhood memories I had with Derek involved these said sports. He taught me how to put, get a good swing in baseball, and to get the perfect swoosh in basketball. We spent a lot of time together outside, even if it was throwing a ball back to each other.

I can confidentially say Derek's love language is quality time and being a gift giver. All he wanted in life is to spend time with the people he cared about. If he met a new friend, he wanted to spend time getting to know them on a personal level. Derek didn't know any strangers. Derek's personality is inviting, warm, hilarious, and friendly. I think his humor alone is why people were so attracted to his character. There truly is no one like him because he was one of a kind. The thing I will miss the most about him is his presence because I knew at some point one of us would walk away in tears from all the laughter.

Derek knew at a young age he wanted to protect and serve. The events of 9/11 are why he chose to join the United States Air Force. After he graduated from High School, he deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan 3 times before his 21st birthday. He loved his job in Security Forces training the Iraqi army, doing humanitarian jobs, and riding the tankers with his military brothers. Derek was honorably discharged in 2012 from a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If Derek had it his way, he would have forever stayed in the USAF so he could continue doing what he loved the most: protect and serve.

Derek loved giving gifts. He would always light up when talking about the children over in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those children had very little. Derek made it a point in his day to ride over to where the children played outside to hand them soccer balls, snacks, and shoes. It became a routine for those children that every time they saw the American Soldiers, they would run towards them with their little hands up ready to catch a soccer ball or to see what goodies they could get out of them. Another wonderful memory I have of him is when he surprised me my senior year of high school while I was working the drive-thru at KFC in my hometown of Wellington, KS. I had no idea he was home on US soil, so seeing him at my work is a core memory I will never ever forget. He was always thinking about others! My boss told me to enjoy the day with my brother and let me go home. We then sneakily surprised my mom at her work! It was one of the best days of my life knowing he was home safe.

After leaving the Air Force, Derek's gifting was far from over. He started a non-profit organization called Rimpact Foundation with a fellow military brother he met in the Air Force. This non-profit helped wounded veterans (whether physically or mentally), to learn how to play golf. He absolutely loved helping others especially if it involved his passion! I believe this was extremely healing for him as well.

Derek is incredibly deserving of this dedication because he spent his whole life helping others and he served our country with great pride. He was so proud of all his accomplishments and I am proud to be the little sister of a hero who gave it all.

Losing a person and grief is often the toughest thing we can go through in our life. Things get left unsaid, emotions not shared, and no closure gained. I believe having this bridge dedicated in Derek's name will bring us a sense of peace that we have been longing for the past 4 years without him. Thank you for your time and reading my letter.

God Bless,

Melanie Marshall

CPO Mark Govea Testimony – HB 2507

CPO Mark A. Govea USN(RET), MBA

1395 Riverwood Court, Lemoore, Ca 93245 · govea559@comcast.net

January 24, 2024

Dear Sir or Ma'am,

I am Chief Petty Officer Mark A. Govea USN(RET). I served in the US Navy for 21 years before retiring in 2008. I am a disabled veteran. I am honored and thrilled at the opportunity to write this letter about SrA Derek Scott Martin for the purpose of memorializing this American Hero with a bridge in his honor.

I came to meet and befriend SrA Martin several years ago, after he and his family moved to Visalia California. Derek was working at Valley Oaks Golf Course, of which I play most of my golf. In casual conversation I learned of Dereks service in the US Air Force and a little bit of the missions and awards he received. Derek was a humble person, as most heroes are. We became good friends.

It was also at this golf course where Derek created and ran Rimpac foundation. As soon as he learned that I was a disabled veteran he took a sincere interest in my well-being. It was at this time that he told me about the Rimpac Foundation and what it was about. Derek created Rimpac to teach disabled veterans to play golf. Derek found a way to teach golf to all veterans no matter the type of disabilities or physical limitations. His foundation offered veterans lessons, equipment, and rounds of golf, all free of cost. It also provided comradery and a place for veterans to congregate amongst their peers. An ulterior yet subtle motive for the Rimpac Foundation was a way to help veterans who suffered from PTSD. As Derek explained to me, "if veterans are out and staying actively busy, then they are not at home sitting in a room dealing the symptoms of PTSD." Derek truly cared about his fellow veterans. He never spoke about his own struggles with PTSD, always putting other veteran struggles ahead of his own.

Derek is the epitome of an American hero. He was an exemplary Airman who served his time in the military with distinction. When discharged and returning stateside Derek found a way to help his fellow veterans. In a way, he continued his service to the country. He was a great man and an even better friend. Honoring SrA Derek Scott Martin with a bridge is perfect gift of gratitude for a hero, and his family. Derek is most deserving of this honor.

CPO Mark A. Govea USN (Ret), MBA

Dear friends,

It is my honor to get to write this letter and tell you about my friend and brother, Derek Martin. I appreciate both your patience in me getting this to you, and your time for reading this; I sincerely appreciate it.

Derek is many things. A father, a brother, a son, an uncle, a friend, but my experience with Derek began with knowing him as a fellow USAF Airman. We met in Mississippi during training for a mission to Baghdad, Iraq, in the Fall/Winter of 2009. We were chosen to be on the same squad, 1-1, and hit it off quick because Derek just made it that easy to have a good relationship with him. He would make the group feel comfortable & laugh while also making sure we knew he took his job seriously and he was going to do everything he could to ensure we got home safe.

By the time we got to Baghdad we had learned more about Derek's history and experience, this was not his first-time walking into a dangerous situation. In some of his previous missions he had been in close-quarters combat with the Taliban in Afghanistan, and on this mission we were heading to Iraq to be a part of the final group of soldiers who would train the Iraqi police & Army how to respond to incidents and protect their population from Al-Qaeda.

There were four trucks in our squad: Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, & Delta. Derek was the Alpha truck driver, and I drove for Delta. This allowed Derek and I to spend even more time together through our driving training, and when we would dismount together on our missions. No matter what we were doing, training or on a mission, there was always a layer of humor and fun present with Derek around. Derek was also a lover of music, especially Metallica, and he was very eager to share this love with the locals in the villages we would visit as well. I have many fun memories of Derek showing different types of music to the local adults and children, and us watching them dance and have fun in the streets.

The children had a special place in Derek's heart wherever we went, too. If we had a mission involving any kind of "gift giving" effort like soccer balls or teddy bears, there was a very strong chance Derek had something to do with the coordination back home to get it done. This also showed in his later involvement with nonprofits and giving back to kids after we were retired for PTSD.

2011 was the year both Derek and I began our exit from the Air Force, after being diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As tough and painful as the diagnosis and years that followed were, it was a blessing to get to experience much of the same process with a brother like Derek, even though we were across the country from each other. Throughout the retirement and reintegration process to civilian life Derek was always there for me when I needed him, never strayed away from an opportunity to support one of his fellow comrades.

After discussing our passions about life and helping others Derek and I decided to start a nonprofit to support veterans coping with mental or physical injuries. Derek was also an incredible golfer & coach, and I mean incredible, so we combined our passions with his skills and in 2014 we started a nonprofit aimed at getting veterans on the golf course as a form of alternative therapy; The Rimpact Foundation.

We ran the Rimpact Foundation as a business for a couple of years holding tournaments and gatherings before deciding to shut it down as an entity, but continuing our work giving back under the brand which allowed us and Derek to focus on what we cared about most, spending time with people. Derek would hold free clinics for veterans or local youth, their families, friends, coordinate events to promote people gathering, secure donations for families in need, and much more.

Personally, I feel like one of the main reasons Derek and I started Rimpact was not only to help other people, but to help ourselves. There is something incredibly healing about helping other people, and Derek certainly knew that. Some of his happiest days would be ones where he had some of his most fun memories with strangers on the golf course helping them learn and grow, or when he would spend time with a struggling veteran ensuring they knew they were not alone.

Derek became a voice for his local veteran community wherever he was, stood up for any veteran brother or sister who needed anything all around the world if/when they asked, and battled his PTSD like the hero he was and is until the very end. When I think of the phrase "American Hero," he certainly will always come to mind. Derek is a true warrior and hero to many, and I could not think of a more deserving veteran for a special memorial that I have ever known.

Thank you again for taking the time to read this, I appreciate it and hope you have a great rest of your day and week.

Respectfully,

Michael Weiss

To Whom It May Concern:

Paula Coffman has been working very hard to have a bridge that will honor her son, SrA Derek Scott Martin. While I never met this young man I know his mother. I understand why she is doing this. As a mother of a son who also lost his battle with PTSD it's very important to us that our sons are remembered for what they did, NOT how they died! Often our sons are overlooked and not honored, because of how they died. Mrs. Coffman is a sweet lady who only wants her son remembered for the person that he was, not a number! This would mean alot to her, and also to his children!

Thank you,

Stephanie Maner

Melissa Bunyard Testimony - HB 2507

Dear Committee,

My name is Melissa Bunyard, I am an aunt of Derek Scott Martin. It is my pleasure to write this letter. He was a great cousin and role model to my son. Derek was a year older, and Cody loved spending time with him, he even wanted to dress like Derek. Swimming and action figures were a couple of their favorite activities.

Derek was involved in many sports during his youth growing up in Wellington. He seemed to excel in everything he did.

The events of 9-11 motivated him to join the Air Force. As a family we were very proud of his bravery and dedication to our country.

While deployed Derek showed his generosity by giving items to children, the soccer balls were a favorite. I was a teacher in Douglass, KS. One year my class wrote letters to Derek while he was deployed. We were lucky to get a visit from him while he was home on leave. That was many years ago but I can still remember the excitement on the students' faces as he walked in wearing his military uniform. He brought pictures and stories with him. I can honestly say that was a highlight of those 8- and 9-year-old children's third grade year.

After his military career ended Derek gave back to his community with his Golf Foundation and even with his own children's school and sporting events.

Derek gave his all to our country. In my opinion dedicating this bridge in his name would be a great honor not only for him but to the town of Wellington and the state of Kansas.

Thank you for considering this memorial.

Sincerely,

Melissa Bunyard

Shawn Coffman- HB 2507

I'm Shawn Coffman, Derek's stepdad. I've had the pleasure of knowing him, since he was a teenager. Derek was energetic, and an overall fun person to be around. He was so proud to serve this country as an airman, and bravely completed 3 deployments to the Middle East. Those deployments certainly took their toll on him, sadly, he didn't return home as the same person he was when he left. Derek's mom, and I always enjoyed our trips to Florida & California to visit Derek and his family. I feel that Derek was an American hero and is deserving to have this bridge dedicated in his name.