

**Testimony of David C Burns, Whiting, ME. before the
Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

April 15, 2021

***LD 537, An Act to Dedicate Sections of Maine's Interstate Highway System to
Fallen State Troopers.***

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. I am David Burns, a former member of the Maine House of Representatives and Senate as well as a retired Maine State Trooper. I come before you today to express my full support for this bill, LD 537, to honor "Fallen Troopers". First I want to thank Senator Diamond, Senator Davis, another retired State Trooper, and the other co-sponsors of this important legislation and tribute to Maine's troopers that have given their lives while serving our State.

As others have testified, twelve Maine Troopers have died in the line of duty in our Agency's 100 year existence, since 1921. These are not just statistics; they are officers with families, friends and fellow officers, who dedicated their lives to serving the citizens of Maine. They readily agreed to put themselves in danger to "serve and protect", to work alone in the middle of the night, often in the middle of nowhere, give up their time off and vacations when asked to, and take on the jobs that most will not do. They were willing to face angry workers that were on strike for better working conditions, chase armed, escaped convicts into the woods, arrest intoxicated, combative drivers that had just crashed into your family's car, or give notification to a mom and dad that their 16 year old daughter was killed in an automobile accident! They were trained to arrest the biggest and toughest criminal, deescalate domestic violence in homes and comfort the smallest child experiencing trauma and fear. These were officers that wore the badge and uniform representing the State of Maine and you, with the upmost pride and professionalism. These were your Maine State Troopers!

In the last several years, there has been unprecedented violence toward those who wear the police uniform and enforce our laws. In 2020, according to the "Officer Down Memorial Page", 359 officers have died in the line of duty in our Country. Veteran police officers are leaving this profession at staggering rates and agencies at all levels are not able to attract new recruits to protect our citizens and communities. When I applied for the State Police in 1970, there were over 2000 applicants to fill twentytwo to 25 recruit positions at the State Police Training Academy. Presently, the Department is fortunate to get a hundred applicants to fill a dozen or so slots in the combined Maine Criminal Justice Academy.

Many other states have established various memorials for their "fallen troopers", such as the "Fallen Michigan State Trooper Memorial". Maine has stepped up to honor other public servants. The "Corporal Eugene Cole Bridge" in Norridgewock is in memory of Deputy Sheriff Cole who was murdered in the line of duty. Fallen Maine Game Wardens have Wildlife Management Areas named in their honor such as the "Lyle Frost Wildlife Management Area" in Franklin and Eastbrook. In Washington County, we have a

section of Rt. 9 that is named in memory of the Honorable Tony Tamaro, a former legislator from Baileyville.

You may ask why this bill would pertain specifically to our Interstate System. State Troopers have the primary responsibility to patrol and enforce the criminal and motor vehicle laws on these highways and it ranges from York to Aroostook Counties. Families, friends, Maine citizens and our out of state visitors would have the opportunity to see these memorials as they travel from one end of Maine to the other. Such memorials not only pay tribute to those Troopers that have made the ultimate sacrifice for Maine, they also would be constant reminders of the importance of safe driving on our highways.

Besides my career in the State Police, two of my sons and a son in law also served. Like most other troopers and law enforcement officers, thankfully we served throughout our time without serious injury or death. However, we have attended the funerals of some of our Fallen Troopers and have seen the anguish and sense of loss of these officers to their families, friends, peers, as well as the loss to this State. I believe that Maine people respect and honor the men and women who serve in law enforcement and desire to recognize those that have made the "ultimate sacrifice" on their behalf! I urge this Committee to unanimously support this bill.

I want to thank you for your consideration and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

David Burns
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