

Written Testimony of Brian D. Smith, before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation.

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 Transportation committee. I am urging you to support LD 537 to honor Maine State Troopers that died in the line of duty. Thank you to Senator Diamond and Senator Davis for sponsoring this very important and long overdue bill. This legislation, if passed would honor the 12 Maine State Troopers that made the ultimate sacrifice while serving and protecting the people of Maine

The Maine State Police was created in 1921 and during these 100 years, a dozen of our Maine State Police were killed in the performance of their duties. I retired from the MSP in 2004 and in my 22 years of service, I worked with 6 of those fallen heroes. Lt. Rene Goupil was the Assistant commander of my Academy in 1982. Detective Giles Landry was a true professional only to be gunned down by a child abuser while trying to save the mother and children in those crimes. Detective Glen Strange was a fellow Detective in my unit who died as a result of being assaulted by a drunk driver he was arresting. Troopers Jeffrey Parola, James Griffith and Michael Veilleux were all killed in crashes while responding to complaints or patrolling to keep our highways safe. All three were recruits in Academy classes that I had the honor of instructing. Jeff was a close friend that I patrolled with and later took hunting and fishing. Sadly I attended the funerals of all six, with hundreds of other officers, families and friends. I saw the grief and utter disbelief their families and fellow officers displayed seeing these young men needlessly die in their prime of life. They gave their lives keeping others from harm and danger.

The Maine State Police has a proud tradition of recruiting the top candidates who give the utmost dedication to their jobs. They work all hours of the day and night, holidays and in all types of weather to serve and protect the citizens of Maine. They still willfully do their jobs despite increasing scorn and even violent attacks on them and their families. They arrest dangerous drivers, rescue abused children, investigate serious crimes against citizens and track down murderers. They help solve decades old “Unsolved” homicides, meet with children at schools and deal with the most violent and dangerous members of our society on a daily basis. Thousands used to apply for two dozen openings but in these uncertain times it is hard to get 100 applicants for the openings. Strict hiring standards and relatively low pay contribute to this difficulty in getting the best quality applicants. One becomes a Trooper because they want to help people, make a difference and leave this state a better place for all of us to live.

I urge this committee to unanimously vote Ought to Pass and hope that the full legislature would vote to support this tribute to 12 Maine Troopers that made the “Ultimate Sacrifice”!

Respectfully Submitted;      Brian Smith – Machiasport, ME – 255-1000

