

Good Morning. I'd like to start off by thanking Senator Ananich for introducing SB 34. Thank you Chairman Cole and members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for taking up SB 34 today.

This bill means more to our family than I can put into words. I would like to share a little about my son, Sgt. Joe Johnson.

Joe deployed to Afghanistan in December 2009 with the 27<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, 161<sup>st</sup> Combat Engineers Rough Terrain Airborne – “Rock Company” as Counter-IED and Route Clearance Patrol – As one officer described it: The most dangerous job in modern times. He was a team leader, dismount leader, field medic. He volunteered for every mission. He worked with armed forces from other countries and was one of a select few handpicked to teach the Afghan army the skills in which he was trained. He liked the Afghan people, and especially had fun with the children. One day he convinced them let him ride their donkey. We have that picture. He dwarfed the donkey. The children were full of smiles and laughter. He was respected and loved by his fellow soldiers, as he loved and respected them.

June 16, 2010, Joe volunteered for what he knew would be a very difficult mission. His company was to clear a dangerous route of obstacles and/or explosive devices for the safety of the local people, as well as other US and allied forces. During this mission, they came under enemy fire. During the long battle that ensued an IED was detonated beneath Joe's vehicle. Please let me share with you an excerpt from a letter we received from the ground commander that day **“As you know Joe was a very impressive young man. He immediately made a lasting impression on my team as someone that we could trust in any situation. Our assessment proved correct as Joe did everything he could to heroically protect the lives of his fellow platoon on June 16<sup>th</sup>. He knew he was volunteering for a very difficult mission but pushed forward without any hesitation. He is a true hero and my team will never forget him.” – Capt. Dan Quinn. Command Sergeant Major Hall wrote us “Joseph was the rare breed today who stepped forward to help others when most step back”.**

His legacy was just beginning. And what a legacy he was building. It's our job, our mission, to see that legacy live and thrive. Joe was just a man. Just an ordinary man....who became an extraordinary soldier. We have wonderful, funny, exasperating memories of Joe. With the passing of SB 34, people years from now will see his name and wonder about him; maybe even learn his story. And Joe will never become only a memory.

Some people never get to meet their heroes. I raised mine. Thank you for letting me share my son, my soldier, my hero with you.