

February 2, 2023

To the House Special Legislation Committee

Re: **Support for the naming of three bridges in South Kingstown (H5233 : 22-7.4-149. Sgt. William G. Fournier Medal of Honor Bridge; 22-7.4-150. Sgt. William J. Babcock Medal of Honor Bridge; 22-7.4-151. Cpl. David B. Champagne Medal of Honor Bridge)**

This letter is to strongly support this legislation naming of the above bridges to honor our town's heroes who through their actions on the battlefield, were recognized with our nation's highest military award, the Congressional Medal of Honor (CMoH). All three of these heroes grew up in South Kingstown and still have family in the area. While Champagne and Fournier were killed in action, Babcock returned to South Kingstown for his remaining years after the Civil War and he and his wife Phoebe are buried less than a mile from where the bridge this bill would be named for him.

David Champagne graduated from the South Kingstown High School in 1951 and in his senior year Class Book, there are six classmates who all served in Korea and were members of the local VFW 916. Of that six, only one is still alive, and this gesture of honor for his classmate means the world to him.

William G Fournier, was my grandfather's brother. "Billy" was killed in 1943 in Guadalcanal. In 1955 my grandfather and his sister presented the awards Billy was awarded posthumously to VFW Post 916 along with citations, letters from Generals and the flag that draped Billy when he was laid to rest. Every June 21st (Billy's birthday) my grandfather would visit the the Post and spend a few hours honoring his brother's shadow box the VFW members created for the sacred items. He taught me the importance of honoring the fallen..

The bridges are all on a route the South Kingstown High School uses as a walking class in the fall and spring. Each year VFW Post 916 visits the schools and talks to the students about the strong history of our town and the military service of its residents. These bridges would be a great opportunity to teach the students who each of our CMoH town recipients are and why their memory is important.

As the State Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars I strongly support this bill.



Joe "Tiger" Patrick II
102nd RI State Commander

DEPARTMENT OF RHODE ISLAND
