

HB2658 Testimony

Gold Star Sibling License Plates

Three minutes. I have three minutes to tell you about my brother. It took a fraction of that time for him to step on a landmine. My brother, US Marine Sergeant Ian Matthew Tawney, died on December 16, 2010, in Sangin, Afghanistan. It's a place most people have never heard of. I know more about Sangin than I care to. Ian left behind his wife and baby girl, who was born three months after he was killed. He was just 25 years old.

The last time I spoke with Ian was over the phone a few weeks before he went to Afghanistan. We talked about his upcoming deployment and preparing for the birth of his first child. I can still hear his voice which was filled with excitement about becoming a father. He and his wife had bought the baby's crib and decided they would name her Claire. I tried to keep him on the phone as long as possible. We finally said our goodbyes and I told him how much I loved him, he said, "I'll be fine."

Three minutes. I have three minutes to tell you what an amazing person Ian was. He was a young man who was born in rural Polk

County. Like many families who have divorced parents, we didn't grow up together. But I had the honor to watch him grow into the finest Marine. I remember watching him at his high school graduation dressed in a black robe with an orange sash, he had a huge smile on his face and he wore a pair of dark sunglasses. He was in his element surrounded by family and friends who had watched him become an adult. Within two years, he had joined the Marines. He led his squad in one of the most dangerous places in the world. And he did so with honor and integrity. He wanted to be there.

But it would take much more than three minutes to tell you everything about my brother and what he represents.

What I will tell you is that Gold Star siblings are everywhere. For every soldier and Marine killed, there are countless brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, cousins, friends and military members who are deeply affected by the loss of their lives.

6,830 lives. We represent the families of the 6,830 military men and women who have given their lives in service to our country since 9/11. We represent the families of the hundreds of thousands of war casualties of our great nation. We are asking you to honor them by allowing the siblings of these men and women to display the Gold Star

license plate on our vehicles. It's a way for us to honor them every day, and to keep their memories alive. The war has not ended, and when it's over, our grief and loss will not end with it. These fine men and women will still be absent from our lives. We cannot forget, ever, what they have done for all of us and our country.

So I'm asking you today to please pass legislation so that the brothers and sisters of our fallen can have the opportunity to be recognized in a very public way as they carry out the legacy of their heroes.

Thank you.

Karin Tawney-Lamberton

