

Chairman, House Veterans and Military Committee

Support of HB 2088 re: mural for the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry

I support HB 2088 because the mural will depict a history of a regiment of brave black soldier who fought for their freedom. They had been enslaved men, many had families, and they felt that they were duty-bound to fight for their freedom.

The vast majority were escaped slaves from Missouri and Arkansas who had sought refuge in "Free Kansas."

President Abraham Lincoln had not approved recruiting Blacks for enlistment in the Union Army. The Regiment was recruited without federal authorization and against the wishes of the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton. Senator James Lane authorized raising of the regiment August 4, 1862 which was before the Civil War began.

The history of these brave men is virtually unknown and a mural of the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry would depict the bravery of these men.

The 1st Kansas Colored Infantry were the first black troops to engage the Confederate Army in battle. This Battle is known as the "Battle of Island Mound which occurred in Bates County, Missouri. They were out- numbered five to one but they prevailed in this battle, they were the first Black troop to die in the Civil war. Guerilla Chieftain Bill Turman stated that they "fought like tigers."

The 1st Kansas Colored Infantry was mustered in the United States Army on January 13th 1863 at Ft. Scott, Kansas, there were 600 enlistees.

The 1st Kansas Colored Infantry engaged in seven battles, Island Mound, Redeemer Farms, Cabin Creek (Oklahoma Territory), Honey Springs (Oklahoma Territory), Timber Hills, and Flat Rock Creek, and Poison Springs, in Arkansas, April 1864

The Black troops knew that they would be treated differently by the Confederate Army than the White Union troops. If they were captured they would not be treated as prisoners of war but would be executed. This happened at Poison Springs. "Remember Poison Springs" became a battle cry for black troops in the Union Army. In spite of this these brave men wanted to fight for their freedom. By 1862, 600 men had enlisted in the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry.

The 1st Kansas Colored Infantry were the first Black Troops to fight alongside white troops in the Civil War. This battle occurred in "The Battle of Honey Springs" (Oklahoma

Territory), July 17, 1863. This battle was the single largest Civil War battle in Indian Territory.

The battle of Honey Springs was a defining moment for the soldiers, their abilities were questioned after the battle of Poison Springs. General James Blunt, commander of the battle of Honey Springs was particularly impressed by the performance of the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry at that engagement. He stated. "I never saw such fighting as was done by the Negro Regiment, the question that Negroes will fight is settled; besides they make better soldiers in every respect than any troops that I have ever had under my command."

A mural of the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry will not make Kansans aware of this Regiment but would tell the story of these soldiers. Because of the movie Glory, it is usually assumed that the 54th Massachusetts Infantry was the first Black Regiment to engage the Confederate Army in the Civil War.

I have personally involved in making this history known for a number of years I was a re-enactor for the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry for about five years. I was present, in re-enactment uniform, when the 1st Kansas Colored Flag was unfurled at the Capitol a few years ago and I traveled to Honey Springs to view the first re-enactment of the battle that occurred there about fifteen years ago. I carried a replica of the original flag to this event and it was used in the re-enactment.

This Regiment lost at least 344 men during service; five officers and 173 enlisted men were killed or mortally wounded, one officer and 165 men died of disease. No other Kansas Regiment lost more men than the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry.

Passage of HB 2088 would not only be informative to many Kansans but it would become a meaningful part of history for the country.

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