

Good Afternoon. My name is Sarah Ward Gaer and I am here on behalf of the Patriot Guard Riders. The Patriot Guard Riders is a diverse combination of riders from across the nation. We have one thing in common besides motorcycles. We have an unwavering respect for those who risk their very lives for America's freedom and security. The Patriot Guard has been referred to as the largest grassroots movement of patriotism in American history having gained nearly 83,000 members nationally in under a year and a half. Our main mission is to attend the funeral services of fallen American heroes **as invited guests of the family.**

Our mission statement also says, "To those of you who are currently serving and fighting for the freedoms of others, at home and abroad, please know that we are backing you. We honor and support you with every mission we carry out, and we are praying for a safe return home for all."

And so I believe it is clear why we, The Patriot Guard Riders, would come here today and ask that House Bill 6060 is supported.

Although truth be told, as bikers, we need little reason to put on our gear, rev up our bikes and throw our faces in the sun and wind, we have a reason, a reason that strikes to the very core of our hearts. It was just a few short months ago that I and more than a hundred patriot guard riders pulled our bikes out of our garages and traveled from all over New England. Unfortunately it wasn't for one of our favorite barbecues, or a bike show, it was to honor a young man who lost his life for our country and to attempt to shield his family from the abuses of the protesters. Unfortunately our ability to shield the family was limited and they were still exposed to signs that read "Thank God for Dead soldiers" and "God laughs at your tears". I know the pain that their songs and poems and signs struck in my own heart and I wasn't even mourning my son, my husband, or my friend. But I was standing proudly amongst many veterans. Veterans who, in all of their toughness, stood silently fighting their anger and hurt. Many of my brothers and sisters in the Patriot Guard are painfully reminded of how they were treated when they came home from Vietnam.

Please send the message, not only to these protesters, but to our troops abroad and at home, that we will not allow them to be abused and disrespected. That we as a country and as a state honor what they have sacrificed. Tell them, that if God forbid, they do not return to their homes, we as a society, will protect their families during times of unbearable pain. Connecticut would not be alone in sending this message, in fact we would join the majority of states in the country who have already done so. Please reference written testimony for entire list.

Alabama
Colorado
Delaware
Florida
Georgia

Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kentucky
Louisiana
Michigan
Maryland
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Nebraska
New Jersey
North Carolina
Ohio
Oklahoma
Pennsylvania
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Virginia
Wisconsin

These state bans do differ in specifics but hopefully send the same message.

No matter how we as Americans feel about the war, I believe that all but a very few Americans are outraged by the protests that have been occurring at our soldiers services. If you have not experienced these protests yourself, I ask that you trust in the 83,000 Patriot Guard Riders and countless other organizations that support and join us on these missions and take a stance with us.

Thank you for your time, consideration and hopefully your support.

Sarah Ward Gaer
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