



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: December 5, 2023
RE: **Testimony on Senate Bill 633**
TO: The Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thanks to the committee for hearing my testimony today. In May, it was my honor to be a guest at the Ho-Chunk Memorial Day Pow-Wow in Black River Falls. It was a great experience and a good opportunity to learn more about the sacrifices Ho-Chunk veterans have made for this country.

One translation of the word Ho-Chunk is "People of the Big Voice". During World War II, at least fourteen Ho-Chunk servicemen used their voices – and their language – to confuse our enemies and help the Allies win the war. They, along with native people from thirty-two other tribes, were Code Talkers. They used their language to facilitate rapid communication and coordination of wartime plans.

Working in pairs, one Code Talker would translate messages from English to their Native language over portable radios to a fellow Code Talker who would translate it back to English from their native language. These codes were never deciphered by the enemy.

This legislation honors the legacy of the Ho-Chunk Code Talkers by naming the stretch of Interstate Highway 90 from the Wisconsin-Minnesota border to the intersection with Interstate Highway 94 in Tomah the "Ho-Chunk World War II Code Talkers Memorial Highway." In light of their significant contributions to our country and world, it's important that we do this.

Before we hear from our next speaker, I'd like to read the names of the fourteen Ho-Chunk Code Talkers who we intend to honor:

Bill Whitebear (Army), Benjamin Winneshiek (Army), Bill Mike (Army), Jesse Mike (Army), Emanuel Thundercloud (Army), Howard Littlejohn (Army), Alvin Blackdeer (Navy), Donald Blackdeer (Army), Irvin Blackdeer (Army), Clifford Blackdeer (Army), George Green (Army), Donald I. Greengrass (Army), Adam Littlebear Jr. (Army), and Alfred O. Stacy (Army).

Thank you once again. I hope that I can count on your vote.



HO-CHUNK NATION LEGISLATURE
Governing Body of the Ho-Chunk Nation

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

Senate Bill 633 (Companion Assembly Bill 678): Designating and marking I-90 the Ho-Chunk World War II Code Talkers Memorial Highway

December 5, 2023
300 Southeast, State Capitol

Ho-Chunk World War II Code Talkers:

During wartime, Code Talkers were American soldiers who utilized their native language as a way to send secret communications on the battlefield. Working in pairs, one Code Talker would translate messages from English to their Native language over a portable radio operated by a fellow Code Talker who would translate it back to English from their native language.

The U.S. Military (Army, Navy, and Marine Corp) developed policies to train and recruit Native soldiers to serve during World War II. The work of these Code Talkers was essential to the Allied victory in World War II. However, the Code Talkers' service was classified, difficult to discern, and not recognized in their discharge papers, making it difficult to acknowledge their contributions during the war.

Native American soldiers from thirty-three (33) tribes from across the country, including three from Wisconsin, served as Code Talkers during World War II. To date, the Department of Defense (DOD) has recognized and listed 14 World War II Veterans from the Ho-Chunk Nation who served as Code Talkers, marking the Ho-Chunk Nation and its members as one of the most recognized tribal nations for its Code Talkers.

Memorial Highway; Recognizing Contribution and Honoring Memory:

Senate Bill 633 designates a portion of Interstate-90 from the Wisconsin-Minnesota state line to the intersection with Interstate-94 in Monroe County as the "Ho-Chunk World War II Code Talkers Memorial Highway." This corridor has the largest number of Ho-Chunk Members near it, in addition to being part of the Nation's ancestral homelands.

Preserving the legacy of the Code Talkers is crucial to honoring their service to the American people and to Nation, and their contribution towards preserving native language for future generations. By designating that portion of I-90 as the Ho-Chunk World War II Code Talkers Memorial Highway, we are honoring their memory and service.