

Re: HB 34, Renaming the Tok River Bridge to the Scott Johnson Memorial Bridge.

Chairpersons and members of the committee,

After much self thought, I have found I must think about policy change beyond myself and what change brings to others.

I realize there is not an inadequacy in policy to address here today. I like the fact that the Tok River Bridge is named what it is. The bridge has held that name for many years. Scott and I have floated the river from dawn till dusk hunting moose from the Glenn Highway to the Alcan Highway ending at the Tok River Bridge. In that same segment of the Tok River, Scott told me stories of camping with his family as a young boy. He and I crossed the bridge twice yearly traveling to and from Eagle, Alaska during hunting season for at least eighteen years prior to him being murdered.

We must remember, policies that are clearly understood and supported by all factions of a community are respected and formulated in a constructive way. I'd appreciate hearing supportive testimony from the communities that centralize the area of the Tok River Bridge. Testimony from just family, friends and co-workers limits the space for community participation and tailors the policy to a few individuals. Through public deliberation across all factions, community members will voice their respect for change or no change. Not everybody likes change. Change shouldn't be based on tradition, personal or political gain of groups or individuals. Allowing and encouraging such involvement can be realized in a way that allows community representatives to become more active members in the policymaking process.

After Scott was murdered, I was asked if I was interested in naming a bridge after Scott and Gabe Rich. I was not, based on the location of the bridge. I don't want to drive past a sign with Scott's name and see that it has been shot up with bullets and spray painted. The disrespect and hurt is terrible. What is going through my child's mind when they see this kind of vandalism? As much as I appreciate the thoughtfulness of the honor, none of these honors take away the pain and loss. If anything, they make it worse for me. This is where I must look beyond myself for others. Scott's job was that of a public servant and now I have found that his death, for many, will always be remembered by his job and not the person he was.

In conclusion, I support the renaming of the Tok River Bridge to the Scott Johnson Memorial Bridge if there is broadspread community support of the centralized area of the bridge. How our lawmakers measure that support I will leave to them.

-Brandy Johnson
Surviving spouse to Scott Johnson