

Date of Hearing: June 27, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Laura Friedman, Chair
SCR 97 (Nielsen) – As Introduced April 6, 2022

SENATE VOTE: 35-0

SUBJECT: The Raymond “Stan” Stanley Statham Memorial Highway

SUMMARY: This measure will designate a portion on State Highway Route 44, from postmile R7.7 to postmile R9, near Oak Run in the County of Shasta, as the Raymond “Stan” Stanley Statham Memorial Highway.

EXISTING LAW: Assigns the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways. This includes the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, but the measure requests that Caltrans determine the cost of appropriate signage consistent with requirements for the state highway system, and only erect the appropriate signage upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost.

COMMENTS: Raymond Stanley Statham was born in Chico, California, on April 7, 1939, to his father, a British citizen who came to California after retiring from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and his mother, a native of Utah, who was a homemaker.

In 1953, Raymond won a contest to host a weekly program as a disc jockey on the local radio station, KPAY, where his first words into the microphone were: “This is Teen Time and you are listening to Stan the Man,” and he was then known as Stan Statham for the rest of his life.

Stan graduated from Chico Senior High School in 1956 and enlisted as a member of the 131st Technical Intelligence Attachment in West Berlin, Germany, and as an American spy during the Cold War, he earned a top-secret clearance using the cover name Roland Stanley. Upon his honorable military discharge in 1959, Stan came home to work as an operations supervisor for Crocker Bank in Yuba City, but longing to return to the airwaves to be the next Dick Clark, Stan soon secured jobs at several radio stations in Northern California, from the low power, nondirectional signal of KAGR to KROY, “The Pulse of Sacramento”. Stan expanded his broadcast resume into television in 1965, accepting the title of News Director and Anchorman KHSL-TV in Chico, where he wrote and delivered the news for over a decade, and during his tenure at the television station, he met and quickly married Geraldine Plants, and they had two children, Devin and Jennifer.

In 1976, Stan decided to make news instead of reporting it, and entered the race for the California State Assembly as a Republican, winning despite having no experience in politics; a true Mr. Statham Goes to Sacramento story. During his 18 years in office, Stan was known by all his legislative colleagues as a moderate, independent thinker who used his considerable speaking talents to reach beyond partisan politics and get things done, putting 90 new laws on the books.

Motivated by the death of his district director from a drunk driver, several of those measures were to enhance DUI penalties, which resulted in President Ronald Reagan taking note of his efforts and appointing Stan as a lifetime member of the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving, an honor bestowed on only 26 citizens so far.

In 1980, Stan learned that farmers were often reluctant for liability reasons to let Senior Gleaners collect unused crops from their fields for distribution to poor communities, so Stan passed the “Brown Bag Act,” which today still provides millions of dollars of free food to senior nutrition programs throughout California.

Stan’s media background became an asset to the California State Assembly in 1989 when efforts formally began to televise legislative sessions and Assembly Speaker Willie Brown appointed him to chair the Committee on Televising the California State Assembly, and gavel-to-gavel coverage started on August 6, 1990.

Stan is best known for his attempt to make Northern California the 51st state, as his advisory measure in 1992 was on 31 county ballots and received a majority vote in 27 of those counties. The results of that election encouraged him to introduce legislation placing a question on a statewide ballot asking voters whether they wanted California divided into three new states, and his measure, Assembly Bill 3, was approved by the California State Assembly with a vote of 46 to 28 on June 10, 1993.

In light of the success of the split-the-state movement, Stan decided to forgo the two remaining years of his term limit in the California State Assembly and instead ran for Lieutenant Governor, and after a dynamic campaign, Stan finished second in the Republican primary behind a last-minute southern California candidate that state party leaders funded to run against him.

Stan was selected as President and CEO of the California Broadcasters Association (CBA) in 1995, the trade group representing more than 1,000 radio and television stations in California, and in that capacity, he moderated six gubernatorial debates, including the recall debate in 2003 with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Stan married his fiancée of three years, Roleeda Epperson, on April 25, 2004, at Wine & Roses in Lodi, California, and they shared a blended family of six children and enjoyed traveling the world, dining out, and watching television together.

Retiring from the CBA after 20 years, Stan roamed between his home in Sacramento and a mountain cabin in Oak Run where his faithful dog Buster resided, writing a weekly column for the Red Bluff Daily News, and visiting with his rural neighbors.

Stan passed away on August 1, 2020; his motto for thriving was: “Life is what we make it to be, moment by moment.”

Stan is survived by his wife, Roleeda Statham; daughter, Jennifer Hejsek; son, Devin Statham; stepdaughters, Jessica and Janis Epperson; stepsons Eric and Steven Epperson; and his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

According to the author, “Stan’s legacy in the Assembly is greater public access to legislative hearings and floor sessions, increased efforts to combat drunk driving, and

improved access to food for California seniors. It is fitting that we honor his service to the people of the State of California by naming a portion of State Highway 44 in Oak Run after him.”

Committee Comments: It is the intent of the Assembly Transportation Committee to use the Memorial Highway Naming process to honor deceased Californians who have made significant public service contributions and also to reflect the diversity of our state. Currently, most named highways in California are for fallen male public safety officers, who made the ultimate sacrifice, and for whom we are indebted. However, these names do not fully represent the wide range of types of public service contributions, as well as the gender and racial diversity of California’s communities. The Assembly Transportation Committee is committed to working with the Department of Transportation in the upcoming year to improve the naming process to ensure greater equity and to better represent the diversity of California.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Broadcasters Association

Opposition

None on file.

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