_____ BILL NO. _____

INTRODUCED BY _____

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: “AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE JEFF "OZZY" OTZWIRK VETERAN MEMORIAL HIGHWAY IN MINERAL COUNTY; DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO INSTALL SIGNS AT THE LOCATION AND TO INCLUDE THE MEMORIAL HIGHWAY IN THE NEXT PUBLICATION OF MAPS THAT IDENTIFY MEMORIAL HIGHWAY DESIGNATIONS IN THE STATE; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE.”

WHEREAS, Jeff "Ozzy" Otzwirk was raised in Haugan, Montana, attended high school in St. Regis, and distinguished himself as a talented athlete and valued community member; and

WHEREAS, Jeff served in the United States Navy aboard the USS Independence (CV-62) and the USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63), completing two deployments to the Persian Gulf; and

WHEREAS, Jeff died by suicide in September 1999, following his return from his second deployment, leaving a profound and lasting impact upon his family, friends, fellow sailors, and the communities of Haugan and St. Regis; and

WHEREAS, Jeff's life and legacy have become the foundation of a growing national suicide prevention awareness effort, transforming the memory of a young sailor from a small Montana community into a message of hope, compassion, and understanding reaching people across the United States; and

WHEREAS, Jeff's beloved 1983 Chevrolet pickup truck, "Ozzy's truck," has become a traveling memorial and powerful symbol of his life, carrying his story nationwide, inspiring people to share deeply personal experiences of military service, mental health challenges, suicide, and the loss of loved ones, creating meaningful conversations that might otherwise have never taken place; and

WHEREAS, Jeff's legacy has grown to address a national crisis affecting Americans of every age and background, demonstrating that the struggles associated with mental health and suicide are not confined to military service but touch families and communities nationwide; and

WHEREAS, the continuing national reach of Jeff's story represents a remarkable and potentially lifesaving legacy, providing opportunities for intervention, connection, and hope for individuals who may be

struggling with thoughts of suicide; and

WHEREAS, the dedication of a portion of Interstate 90 near Jeff's hometown of Haugan would honor the life of a son of Montana, his athletic accomplishments, his relationships, his service to the United States Navy, and his memory's inspiration for a national mission of suicide prevention awareness, with the potential to save lives for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, the 70th Legislature of the State of Montana honors Jeff "Ozzy" Otzwirk and designates this memorial highway to encourage those who travel through western Montana to learn Jeff's story, recognize the importance of mental health awareness, and understand the profound difference that compassion, connection, and intervention can make in saving lives.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Jeff "Ozzy" Otzwirk veteran memorial highway.** (1) There is established the Jeff "Ozzy" Otzwirk veteran memorial highway on the existing U.S. interstate highway 90 from mile marker 16 to mile marker 18, in Mineral county near the community of Haugan, Montana.

(2) The department shall design and install appropriate signs marking the location of the Jeff "Ozzy" Otzwirk veteran memorial highway.

(3) Maps that identify memorial highway designations in the state must be updated to include the Jeff "Ozzy" Otzwirk veteran memorial highway when the department updates and publishes the maps.

NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Codification instruction.** [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 60, chapter 1, part 2, and the provisions of Title 60, chapter 1, part 2, apply to [section 1].

NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Effective date.** [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

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