

January 22, 2024

House Federal and State Affairs Committee Members

RE: House Bill No. 2208

I am a current resident of Johnson County. I urge you to oppose House Bill No. 2208, authorizing conveying ownership of the Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Site to the Shawnee Tribe of Miami, OK.

As someone who has lived and worked on an Indian reservation and been familiar with Indian affairs for many years, I am generally in favor of the restoration of public lands to their original native inhabitants. However, this case is different. The Shawnee Indian Mission site has a long, complex history that extends well beyond its relationship with the single Shawnee Tribe that is the subject of this legislation. Even if one focuses on only the boarding school phase of this history, twenty-two different Native nations are involved. In fact, Kaw Nation leaders, descendants of the original inhabitants of this area, have issued a public statement opposing conveyance of the property to any entity other than the Kaw Nation. In this particular case, I would be opposed to conveyance to the Kaw Nation as well.

The Kansas State Historical Society which currently maintains the structures at the Shawnee Indian Mission should remain as custodian of this site. With their experience and resources in managing many historical sites throughout the state, they are in the best position to continue to properly oversee this site with the interests of all related parties in mind. The Historical Society is able to build partnerships and bridges between multiple interest groups to see that each has a voice in preserving this site for the education of all citizens and visitors to the state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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