

February 19, 2025

Dear Representative,

I have been following the current Shawnee Chief's efforts to secure the Mission land for his tribe's sole ownership, despite legitimate ancestral claims of the Kansa. I find it suspicious that he promises only opportunities for others to "consult" once he controls the land. Not to partner, just to "consult".

The current partnership of KS State ownership, City of Fairway management, and a diverse Foundation Board has openly reached out to all tribes and others with a history with the Mission. While other tribes, including the Kansa, have welcomed this partnership, the Shawnee Chief has been nonresponsive and frankly dishonest in his representations of contact with the City and others.

The Shawnee Indian Mission site is replete with extensive American and Kansan history, not just that involving the Shawnee. It was founded by the Methodist Church at the request of the then Shawnee Chief (Chief Fish) to serve as a school for 22 tribes in the area. It was a boarding school for only some of its 23 years as a school. Students commonly went home during summer. It was not part of the Federally Mandated Schools that sadly have a history of nefarious behavior. It is egregious to suggest otherwise.

It also has been the site of many other significant historical events (e.g., first statehood vote for Kansas, union encampment during Civil War, hospital for Battle of Westport). **Please ensure that this precious historical landmark remains in the public domain to be enjoyed and celebrated by all.**

Thank you,

Lauren Aaronson
Fairway, KS

A-J

To All Concerned...

It has been brought to my attention the Shawnee Chief is wanting the land on which the Shawnee Indian Mission has been sitting for many years. WHY do they think they own the remaining 12 acres of history. It is the most significant Historical site in the state of Kansas.

The Mission is a wonderful historical site that many people enjoy. Many volunteers spend hours keeping it in good condition. The Master Garden Society plants native plants and keeps them beautiful for others to enjoy. Children enjoy the field trips to learn how their ancestors lived. The neighbors sit on benches outside the Mission buildings' watching the birds, squirrels, and other inhabitants of the grounds, as they feel the energy of the past. It was established to educate First Americans new ways to make things better in their world and now is there to educate the citizens about the past of Kansas Statehood, Bleeding Kansas, Trails West, and the Civil War.

There was a rumor floating around that the Chief wanted to turn the Mission into a casino. I don't believe the schools, churches, or merchants would allow their community to be overrun by gamblers.

I find no reason the Shawnee should be the only voice in this decision. There were 22 tribes whose parents' send their children to learn about the next America. They too should be heard along with the city of Fairway, Johnson County, and volunteers like me.

Gayle Martin Alexander, volunteer

To: Kansas House Federal and State Affairs Committee

From: Phil Baniewicz, President,
Bishop Miege Catholic High School
5041 Reinhardt Dr.
Roeland Park, KS 66205

Topic: **The Shawnee Indian Mission in Fairway being given to
Chief Barnes and the Shawnee Tribe in Oklahoma.**

February 20, 2025

Dear Kansas House Federal and State Affairs Committee:

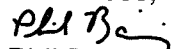
It was brought to my attention today that a bill was introduced to give the Shawnee Indian Mission in Fairway to one of three Shawnee tribes in Oklahoma. Bishop Miege Catholic High School, sides with the Kansas Historical Society, the City of Fairway, the Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation, Kaw Nation and many other stakeholders to oppose conveyance of this National Historic Landmark.

We have been neighbors with the Mission since the school started in 1958 and even earlier when we were St. Agnes High School. Over the years, our students and students from neighboring schools have enjoyed the Shawnee Indian Mission as a national historical landmark. Several classes from our school annually have students go through the Mission to learn about it's history, the history of Kansas, the local impact of the Civil War, and more. This educational experience is something our students and others should always have access to as they learn valuable insights about our local history.

Our school, the local governments, and neighbors are strongly opposed to this bill passing and perhaps changing the history of this National Landmark. We appreciate the relationship with the current Mission and hope this will continue. If one of the tribes were to be given ownership, how long before a Casino is built right next to our high school and St. Agnes Catholic grade school? We want what is best for our kids and the future of this area.

Again, we as a school community, are vehemently opposed to this bill.
Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my plea.

God bless,



Phil Baniewicz

President

Bishop Miege Catholic High School

Testimony Opposing HB 2384
Submitted to the Kansas House Federal and State Affairs
Committee

Date: February 20, 2025

Dear Chairman Kessler and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christopher Brent, and I am a resident of Fairway, Kansas. I live blocks away from the Shawnee Indian Mission. I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 2384, which proposes transferring ownership of the Shawnee Indian Mission to the Shawnee Tribe.

As someone who has grown up around the Shawnee Indian Mission, I have seen firsthand the importance of this historic site as a resource for education and cultural preservation. The Mission is not just a local landmark—it is a National Historic Landmark that tells a complex and multifaceted story of Native American history, westward expansion, Kansas statehood, and the Civil War.

I oppose this bill for the following reasons:

1. **Loss of Public Access and Historical Preservation:**
Transferring ownership could jeopardize public access to the site and its preservation. The Mission's history extends beyond any single group, encompassing the experiences of 22 tribes, early Kansans, and countless others. Its current status ensures that this history remains accessible to all Kansans and visitors.
2. **Uncertain Future Use:** If conveyed, there are no guarantees about how the land will be used or preserved in the future. Sovereign control by the Shawnee Tribe could limit

oversight by the State of Kansas or the City of Fairway, potentially altering its purpose as a historic site open to all.

3. Impact on Education: The Mission serves as an invaluable educational resource for future generations. Allowing it to remain under state stewardship ensures that its rich history continues to be told comprehensively and factually for all Kansans—not just from one perspective but from many voices tied to its legacy.

While I respect the Shawnee Tribe's connection to this land, I believe there are better ways to address their concerns without transferring ownership. Collaborative efforts between tribes, the Kansas Historical Society, and local stakeholders could achieve restoration goals while preserving public access and historical integrity.

I urge you to vote against HB 2384 to protect this irreplaceable piece of Kansas history for generations to come. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Christopher Brent

5635 Suwanee Road
Fairway, KS 66205

cvbrent@gmail.com
913-449-3954

From: Ford Brent <fordbrent@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2025 4:10 PM

To: Nathan Nogelmeier <nnogelmeier@fairwaykansas.org>

Subject: Shawnee Indian Mission

Legislators,

The Kansas legislature should not convey the historic Shawnee Indian Mission to the Shawnee Tribe. If conveyance is allowed, case law is clear that the Shawnee tribe could do all sorts of things with the property - Kansans would simply be locked

out as to the properties future use.

The Shawnee Indian Mission is the only national historic landmark in Johnson County. Beside the several tribes that schooled children at the mission there were

several others who lived in the area and used the Mission.

Currently, the loss of the Mission would prevent Kansans and others to participate

in critical historical educational significance provided by the Mission. Simply put, educational opportunities would be lost.

My wife and I strongly object to any conveyance of the Shawnee Indian Mission State Historical Site /National Historical Landmark.

State Historical Site /National Historical Landmark.

Ford Brent

Diane Brent

2/20/2025

Jeffrey F. Brent, MD

5620 Neosho Ave

Fairway KS 66205

Federal and State Affairs Committee members:

The Shawnee Indian Mission has been a cornerstone of the surrounding communities for a very long time. As school children and later as returning adults we get to see a piece of history that has defined our whole county and given name to so many area entities that reflect the significance of the Shawnee Tribe.

The Indian Mission has been well cared for under current arrangements and to consider handing it over to others with no guarantees over how it may be cared for, used or redeveloped may be initially considered out of good intent but would be reckless and irresponsible in terms of the future of the Indian Mission and the effect on the surrounding residential community.

Unlike perhaps some other locations, this land is not "owed" to anyone and transferring it to a group not subject to City laws and zoning regulations would be dropping a bomb in the middle of a quiet residential neighborhood, opening it up to unknown unregulated redevelopment and use in the future.

The hardworking agencies and volunteers who have cared for the Mission are doing a great job. The status quo is the right answer.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey F. Brent

Regarding HB 2384

Testimony of David Boutros, Mission, Kansas, 66205

Thank you for receiving and considering my testimony. I am David Boutros, a resident of Mission, Kansas. I am a historian, a retired archivist, and currently secretary for the Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation.

I strongly oppose the conveyance of the Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Site to the Shawnee Tribe of Miami, OK, primarily because I believe the Kansas State Historical Society, who has maintained the site since 1927—three times longer than the Shawnee resided in Kansas—along with its partners, the City of Fairway and the Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation, as well as other organizations, would provide the public a richer, more complete and useful history.

As a historian I look for a useable past—an understanding, based on facts, that informs the present and helps anticipate the future. This is done by critically and sensitively revealing stories of events and comprehending motives, limits, strengths, and failings of the event's participants. A friend once told me that, "Historians like to read dead peoples' mail!" And she's right because we are looking for ideas and feelings that translate to actions.

Simply, I have no confidence that the Shawnee Tribe can or will look beyond a very narrow myth about what occurred at the Mission. Chief Barnes has talked about children taken from their parents; forced labor; Indian boys locked away to sleep in a windowless, unheated attic; and children buried on the grounds. And he is right, that happened, in Canada and here in the U.S. But not at the Shawnee Indian Mission, fortunately. There is no evidence for that scenario, and, in fact, ample evidence against it. But, unfortunately Chief Barnes has routinely conflated the pre-Civil War missionary-based education system for students whose parents chose to have their children participate with the post-War mandatory system that so damaged the Native peoples. Chief Barnes has publicly stated his interest in interpreting the Mission as the epitome of cultural genocide and white abuse of the Native peoples. This is an extraordinary misinterpretation of the facts and history of the Shawnee Indian Mission.

That is not to say that the Mission was not part of the inherent racism of the U.S. policy to assimilate the Indians. That racism must be part of the interpretation of the Historic Site, and it is there now, though you won't find anyone at the Historical Society, City or Foundation to suggest we couldn't do better, which was why we so wholeheartedly welcomed the Shawnee Tribe's interest in working with us. Unfortunately, that did not materialize. While Chief Barnes has refused our overtures and worked to sabotage our efforts to reach out to First Americans, other tribes and Native individuals have expressed interest and support for us.

But the Mission history is much more than the Indian Manual Labor School. It's been suggested that it was there the Border War was born—the first battles of the Civil War. That's maybe a little much but the role of the Bogus Legislature meeting at the

Mission cannot be discounted and arguably is a larger, more significant story than the Indian school. Also, the Mission lands straddled the Santa Fe, Oregon, California road down which explorers, traders, and settlers traveled, often camping at the Mission and outfitting from its stores.

Union soldiers bivouacked at the Mission and used the buildings as a hospital, some even were buried in the Johnson family cemetery. Despite having owned slaves, Thomas Johnson was a Union loyalist whose son Alexander was a colonel in the Kansas Militia.

These are big stories that I don't believe the Shawnee Tribe has an interest in telling. And beyond these are little stories about education, religion, agriculture, and industry, and of the Mission lands becoming farms and then subdivisions for a burgeoning suburban community. Much of this happened well after the Shawnee left Kansas.

To repeat the point: the State Historic Site represents a rich, varied history for Kansas, the Midwest, and the Nation. The Kansas State Historical Society along with its partners, cooperatively are the best arbiters of that full history, to insure we have a useable past. Other organizations are already contributing, and the Shawnees and other tribes have been invited, and some accepted to work for the betterment of the Mission and its stories. The desire is to be inclusive rather than limited.

It is clear that I doubt the ability or willingness of the Shawnee Tribe to carry through on their promises to restore and fully interpret the Site's stories. What have they done with the Shawnee Cemetery that was conveyed to them a few years ago? If their interest was truly the preservation of the Mission, why have they been so unwilling to work with us and so active to disparage the State, City and Foundation? Would not even a tenth of the funds they have spent on lobbyists, lawyers, and public relations been better used to assist us in maintenance and planning, rather than wanting to acquire the property?

Whatever Chief Barnes' intentions, I am concerned that some future chief, faced with questions about why the tribe is spending money on a site so far from Miami, would bow to use the land for economic benefit. Once the conveyance is made, State and local control is lost. If that seems unlikely, please remember the Wyandotte Casino in downtown Kansas City, Kansas.

Please, please discard this idea of conveyance and support the Kansas State Historical Society and its partners to secure a future for the Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Site.

Thank you for your attention.

February 20, 2025

I am writing this letter to oppose the transfer of ownership of the Shawnee Indian Mission.

This is my thirty-seventh year on the faculty at Bishop Miege High School. I was a theology teacher for twenty-eight years. This is my ninth year serving as the Director of Campus Ministry. I am also a Class of 1983 graduate of Miege.

The Shawnee Indian Mission is not only an important part of the history of our country, region, state, and tri-cities of Fairway, Westwood, and Roeland Park, it is also a significant presence in the lives of the neighborhood homes, Bishop Miege High School, Saint Agnes Catholic Grade School, and Saint Agnes Catholic Church.

From what I understand, new owners could limit or eliminate public access, repurpose the buildings, or get rid of the historic landmark altogether and replace it with something else.

My number one concern is the loss of the history and traditions of the mission, neighborhood, and community. My second major concern is the speculation that a casino could be one of the things replacing the mission. The possibility of a casino being built on this historic site saddens me for the reasons shared above and it seriously concerns me that a casino would neighbor the homes, schools, and church.

Thanks very much.

God Bless and All the Best.

Bill Creach

Subject: Oppose HB 2384 – Preserve the Shawnee Indian Mission for Education, Not Commercial Use

Dear Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee,

As an educator and resident of this community, I strongly oppose HB 2384, which would transfer ownership of the Shawnee Indian Mission to one of three present-day Shawnee Tribes in Oklahoma. This site is an invaluable historical and educational resource, and its preservation and accessibility are essential to teaching both students and the public about our shared history.

The Shawnee Indian Mission tells important stories—not only of the 22 tribes whose children attended the school but also of Kansas Statehood, westward expansion, and the Civil War. If this bill passes, there is no guarantee that the site will remain a protected landmark or that the public will continue to have access. Additionally, transferring ownership to an out-of-state entity could remove local and state oversight, leaving the future of this historic site uncertain.

There are also growing concerns in the community regarding the potential development of a casino on the land, which would be located between two schools. While there are no guarantees that the site will remain a historical landmark, there are legal pathways that could allow the land to be used for commercial purposes under tribal sovereignty. Such a development would not only erase a critical piece of our history but also drastically change the character of our neighborhood and negatively impact students and families in the area.

As an educator, I have seen firsthand how the Mission serves as a powerful, fact-based learning tool. Students gain a deeper understanding of our history when they can visit and engage with places like this. If conveyed, we risk losing an irreplaceable educational resource that benefits not just Kansas residents, but all who seek to learn from the past.

I urge you to oppose HB 2384 and ensure that the Shawnee Indian Mission remains under the stewardship of the State of Kansas, preserving its historical and educational significance for future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Dessert

Teacher at Bishop Miege High School and local resident



HB 2385

Cover Page/ Testimony Against



Kathy Dix

2/20/25

Given less than 24 hours to write a written testimony against HB2385, I will condense my opposition, not having time to outline the 30 some years I've volunteered at the Shawnee Indian Mission,

Chief Ben Barnes with the help of House Rep. Kessler is pushing through HB2385 without proper evaluation to the residents of Fairway, KS. , and to the objection of the Kansas Historical Society, the Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation and all the volunteers and donors of the Shawnee Indian Mission,

The HB 2385 bill , via Rep.Kessler states it " prohibits gaming or gambling on the property". However, if the Shawnee tribe takes the property under the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), the U.S.Secretary of the Interior could remove the property from the state jurisdiction and allow for gaming operations.

ie: Case in point: Chief Bill Barnes Golden Mesa Casino in Guymon, OK.

Furthermore, the concept that the Shawnee tribe, under the overseeing of Chief Bill Barnes; would continue the Historical educational needs for the State of Kansas, such as the KS Statehood, Bleeding KS, Trails West and the Civil War + the additional 22 tribes that historically utilized the school; is not fathomable.

If House Rep. Kessler is suppose to be working for the "majority" of Kansans , he would not be pushing this bill through with little time to have open discussions with the residents of Johnson County .

Lastly, ask yourself this: If Chief Barnes interest is to " provide dialogue regarding the history, to educate actual historical interpretation, and preserve and maintain the site.....why can't the Shawnee tribe work with the existing Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation, the City of Fairway and the KS Historical Society ?

I ask you to postpone HB2385 until further discussions can be made in a timely manner. Proposing this bill on February 13, with a deadline of February 20th to provide written testimony against or for this proposal shows a lack of consideration for the very people who have kept the Shawnee Indian Mission open. As well as the public that depend on the events and education the Mission provides currently. Such as: Educational school tours, Trails of the West, Shawnee Indian Mission Christmas Tree Sale, Shawnee Indian Mission Fall Festival , Three Springs Market Place, and many more activities and events for the community to engage and learn history.

As of February 20, 2025, Kansas House Bill 2384 proposes authorizing the state historical society to convey certain real property in Johnson County to the Shawnee Tribe. The bill includes provisions prohibiting gaming or gambling on the property and requires the Shawnee Tribe to report biennially over a decade on property rehabilitation and consultations with other tribes. [KSLEGISLATURE.GOV](https://kslegislature.gov)

Currently, there is limited public information regarding the stance of Fairway, Kansas residents on HB 2384. No public comments or discussions specific to this bill have been documented. [LEGISCAN.COM](https://legiscan.com)

The property in question is located in Johnson County, which encompasses Fairway. However, without specific data or public opinion polls, it's challenging to determine the consensus among Fairway residents regarding HB 2384.

February 20, 2025

Kansas House of Representatives
Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to **strongly** oppose HB2384 which proposes the conveyance of the Shawnee Indian Mission to the Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma.

The Mission is a National Landmark and is considered the most important historic site in the State of Kansas. The Mission is over 180 years old and does not encompass the history of just one single group. It has impacted the entire State of Kansas as well as all Kansas residents. Should the site be conveyed to the Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, it is clear that this history will be lost.

Regardless of the promises made in HB2384 by the Shawnee Tribe there is no guarantee as to how the land will be used in the future. Tribal land can be placed in trust with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Federal Interior Department. Once this occurs the land is considered sovereign and **NOT** subject to state and local laws. **Promises made in HB2384 would not apply.** The land would be governed only by tribal and federal laws. The Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma has artfully used the protection of BIA land trust agreements to develop their casino in Guymon, Oklahoma, which is over 400 miles from their headquarters in Miami, Oklahoma.

The Shawnee Indian Mission is currently operated and funded by a unique partnership agreement that includes the Kansas State Historical Society, the City of Fairway and the Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation. The agreement is designed to assure the longevity, preservation and operations of the site for the benefit **of all Kansas residents**. It is a model of collaboration that is likely to be used by other national historic sites and should be supported and celebrated by the Kansas Legislature.

I have personally volunteered and financially supported the Shawnee Indian Mission for over 17 years. This is a community asset that is important to the entire State of Kansas and vital to the communities in Northeast Johnson County. Conveyance of the property to any single group of people, especially those exempt from local and state laws, would do irreversible harm to the region.

For these reasons and many others, I urge you to vote against HB2384.

Respectfully,

Tom Dix
Vice- Chair, Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation

To Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee:

Regarding House Bill No. 2384

As a homeowner and resident in the City of Fairway in Johnson County, Kansas, I, Robert E. Duckworth would like to express my opposition to House Bill No. 2384, which has been proposed to transfer ownership of the land and buildings commonly known as the Shawnee Indian Mission (the "Mission") to the Shawnee Tribe in Oklahoma.

The reasons for my opposition are primarily as documented in a Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation distribution and are as follows:

1. **Loss of History** - If the site is conveyed, the Shawnee Tribe—now or in the future—could limit or eliminate public access. This would mean the loss of an important historical resource that tells the stories of the 22 tribes who sent children to the school, the land's original inhabitants before the Shawnee arrived, and the role of the site in Kansas Statehood, Bleeding Kansas, Trails West, and the Civil War.
2. **Future Use of the Land** - There are no guarantees that current or future Shawnee Tribe leadership will preserve the site as a historical landmark. Likewise, legal pathways exist for the Shawnee Tribe to claim the land as sovereign, meaning the State of Kansas and the City of Fairway could lose jurisdictional authority over its use.
3. **Loss of Educational Opportunities** - The Mission serves as a fact-based educational institution for Kansans and others. The history of the Mission is significant to First Americans and westward expansion, the Civil War, and early Kansas history. If the Mission was conveyed, the Kansas Legislature would be giving away educational opportunities for future generations.

In addition to the reasons expressed above, I have concerns that the proposed transfer would have a negative impact on the sense of neighborhood and community that is instilled by the present existing ownership and operational structure of the Mission. Presently, the Mission serves as a gathering place throughout the year for a number of activities and events for the local Fairway community. I fear that such activities would drastically diminish or be totally eliminated should such property transfer occur.

For these reasons, I am against House Bill No. 2384 and I encourage you to oppose the bill on behalf of your constituency.



Robert E. Duckworth
3818 W. 57th Terrace
Fairway, KS 66205

This proposal to remove an important historical site from the public domain and hand it over to one special interest is flawed and inappropriate. Historic preservation is vital to the awareness and education of a society, and the public ownership of such facilities is the only way to preserve the integrity of their history.

As a **Kansas State Historic Site** and the **only National Historic Landmark** in **Johnson County**, the Shawnee Indian Mission Historic Site in Fairway, KS is an important historical resource which tells the story of 22 tribes who sent children to the school, not just Shawnee kids. That includes the land's original inhabitants before the Shawnee arrived. This site played a vital role in the **history of Kansas Statehood**, **Bleeding Kansas**, **Trails West**, and the **Civil War**.

It seems obvious, though apparently still needs to be repeated, that the potential problems with the conveyance of this public resource to private ownership are many and significant:

1. Loss of History or Revision of History

If the site is conveyed, the Shawnee Tribe—now or in the future—could limit or eliminate public access. They could also reinterpret the site's history with bias and without vetting or accountability. The facts of history are often distorted for personal gain, and without a responsible public agency and broad scholarly oversight, the truth of any history can be subverted.

2. Loss of Educational Opportunities

- The Mission serves as a **fact-based, impartial educational institution** for Kansans and visitors from other states and countries.
- Its history is significant to both **First Americans** and **westward expansion**, the **Civil War**, and **early Kansas history**.
- If conveyed, the **Kansas Legislature** would be giving away educational opportunities for future generations.

3. Future Use of the Land

- **No guarantee** exists that current or future Shawnee Tribe leadership will preserve the site as a historical landmark.
- **Legal pathways** exist for the Shawnee Tribe to declare the land as sovereign, meaning the **State of Kansas** and the **City of Fairway** could lose **jurisdictional authority** over its use. This could include zoning regulations and utility access.

Thank you for your careful consideration. - Jocelyn Ball-Edson

Diane Euston
1 W 89th Terrace
Kansas City, MO 64114
thefamilygenies@gmail.com
February 19, 2025

Kansas House Federal and State Affairs Committee

RE: Hearing on HB 2384

Dear Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Shawnee Indian Mission remaining a historic site under the control of the state of Kansas and the city of Fairway; therefore, I strongly oppose HB 2384. As a historian, I deeply understand the layers of history that this site represents, and I believe it is vital to preserve this heritage for future generations.

The Shawnee Indian Mission, founded at its current site in 1839, is one of the most significant historical sites in Kansas, as it represents a complex intersection of Native American history, U.S. government policies, and the tragic consequences of westward expansion. It was originally established as a religious and educational institution aimed at assimilating Native American tribes into American society. Although the Shawnee tribe, along with other tribes, was involved in the mission, it is essential to recognize that 22 tribes in total attended the school, each contributing their own unique history and perspective to this space. This diversity is a critical part of the mission's legacy and reinforces the site's importance as an enduring symbol of the struggles and resilience of indigenous peoples across the Midwest.

While the Shawnee tribe held the land for only 28 years, it is important to remember that their role in the area was part of a larger historical narrative that extends far beyond that period. The land has seen countless events, many of which are connected to the broader history of forced relocation, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, territorial elections, Bleeding Kansas and the American Civil War. To reduce the site's history to merely the 28 years the Shawnee tribe occupied it is to overlook the broader significance it holds for multiple tribes, for the state of Kansas, and for the nation as a whole.

There are understandable concerns regarding what might happen to the Shawnee Indian Mission if it were returned to the Shawnee tribe or any other group with a claim to the land. Without the proper infrastructure and protections, the historical value of this site could be jeopardized. The land was indigenous land for the Kanza tribe, and relinquishing control of this land to one tribe, the Shawnee, likely will create other unforeseen issues with "ownership."

The educational and commemorative purpose of this site would be put at risk, especially considering the uncertainty about how the Shawnee tribe or any other tribal group might choose to manage the land. While I fully respect the rights of Native tribes to govern their land, we must

also consider the preservation of a space that serves as a historical education center for all Kansans, as well as the broader public.

Preserving the Shawnee Indian Mission as a historic site under the control of the state and city ensures that its historical integrity is maintained, that it continues to educate the public about the diverse histories and cultures of Native Americans, and that it remains accessible for generations to come. The historical narrative embedded within the mission cannot and should not be erased or diluted—it is an essential part of both Kansas and U.S. history.

I respectfully urge you to consider the broader implications of any decision to return the Shawnee Indian Mission land and to prioritize the protection and preservation of this valuable historical site.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Diane Euston, M.Ed., M.Hist.
Historian

Comments for the House Federal and State Affairs Committee -
Opposing House Bill No.2384

In 1825 the government of the United States defined a reservation for the Shawnee west of Missouri on land that had been part of the lands of the Kansa. Between 1827 and 1833 the Shawnee moved to this new area – 2/3 from their Missouri lands and 1/3 from Ohio reservations. In 1830 some of the leaders of the Shawnee requested, though the government agent, a Methodist school and mission. By December of that year Rev. Johnson had arrived and had the day school open in March 1831. By the mid 1830's the success of the manual training program had more students attending than they had space for. Therefore, in the fall of 1839 the Fairway site opened as a boarding school and over the next 15 years had students from 22 different tribes. The Kansas -Nebraska Act of 1854 brought an end to the reservation and the Indian Manual Labor School (aka. Shawnee Indian Mission).

While the 12 acres that are the historical site and the 3 major buildings that remain are a base for understanding the efforts of the school and mission they only represent a 15 year segment of the history of this site. Without these buildings 3-4 dozen houses would occupy the site today. A complete history can only be understood by a study of the centuries before the arrival of the Shawnee and of the period since 1854 – a continuing school till 1862, Bleeding Kansas - Ad Astra Per Aspera - from Territory to Statehood, Civil War, and since 1867 the years of private ownership and its role in the growth of Johnson County. This last part should include the development of the full 2000 acres of the original Mission. Then the work of the State of Kansas since 1927 to maintain the site and promote an understanding of its history and significance.

Therefore, any proposal to shift ownership and control of the Shawnee Indian Mission – A State Historical Site to a group that had a limited presence for a limited time can not be in the best interest of the public and those committed to a full, and evolving, understanding of its history.

John W. Forbes

Historian – Shawnee Mission Indian Historical Society

Organized October 1930

25 February 2025



Kansas House Committee Members,

It has come to my attention that a special hearing has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 25th, 2025, to review a bill that was introduced into the Kansas House Federal and State Affairs Committee in Topeka. Similar to a bill filed in the last legislative cycle, this legislation—if passed—would require the State of Kansas to convey the Shawnee Indian Mission in Fairway to one of three present-day Shawnee Tribes located in Oklahoma. As a neighbor, St Agnes Parish is opposed to this conveyance of this National Historic Landmark to any of the three Shawnee tribes located in Oklahoma.

This proposed conveyance does nothing to guarantee the continued work that has been performed by the:

- Kansas State Historical Society
- City of Fairway
- Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation

Conveying the land to one of any of these three tribes will do nothing to preserve the history of this historic site. The history and action of these Shawnee tribes reflect disregard for what this historic site has accomplished. The site would no longer be a resource to our and our neighbors communities

If the site is conveyed, the Shawnee Tribe—now or in the future—could limit or eliminate public access. This would mean the loss of an important historical resource that tells the stories of:

- The 22 tribes who sent children to the school
- The land's original inhabitants before the Shawnee arrived
- The role of the site in Kansas Statehood, Bleeding Kansas, Trails West, and the Civil War



Putting the land in the hands of these tribes will lead us to a future that gives us and our neighbors

- No guarantee exists that current or future Shawnee Tribe leadership will preserve the site as a historical landmark.
- Legal pathways exist for the Shawnee Tribe to claim the land as sovereign, meaning the State of Kansas and the City of Fairway could lose jurisdictional authority over its use.

Conveying the land will also mean the loss of an educational resource that the site has become to our communities.

- The Mission serves as a fact-based educational institution for Kansans and beyond.
- Its history is significant to both First Americans and westward expansion, the Civil War, and early Kansas history.
- If conveyed, the Kansas Legislature would be giving away educational opportunities for future generations.

I respectfully urge you to not allow this conveyance, but rather to retain this National Historic Landmark in the hands of the:

- Kansas State Historical Society
- City of Fairway
- Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation

Sincerely,

Michael Gomez

Saint Agnes Church
5250 Mission Rd. Roeland Park, KS 66205
Parish Ministries & Business Manager
gomez.mike@stagneskc.org
913-262-2400 (Rectory office)
913-766-9758 (direct line)

Subject: Opposition to HB 2384 – Preservation of the Shawnee Indian Mission

Dear Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 2384, which would transfer ownership of the Shawnee Indian Mission to one of three present-day Shawnee Tribes in Oklahoma. This site is a vital part of Kansas history and the only National Historic Landmark in Johnson County. Its continued preservation and public accessibility are essential to honoring the stories of the 22 tribes whose children attended the school and the site's role in pivotal moments like Kansas Statehood and the Civil War.

If this bill passes, there is no guarantee the site will remain a protected historic landmark, and public access could be limited or eliminated. Additionally, transferring the site to tribal ownership could remove state and local oversight, leaving the future use of this irreplaceable resource uncertain. The Shawnee Indian Mission is more than just a piece of land—it is an educational treasure that connects us to our shared history, and its loss would diminish future opportunities for learning and understanding.

I urge you to oppose HB 2384 and protect the Shawnee Indian Mission for future generations by keeping it under the stewardship of the State of Kansas.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Brendan and Natalie Hall

Resident, educator, and visitor to the Shawnee Indian Mission

Jane Hess
5429 Pawnee Ln
Fairway, Kansas 66205
February 20, 2025

Kansas House of Representatives
Committee on Federal and House Affairs

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

I am writing to oppose the Kansas House Bill 2384 that would convey the Shawnee Indian Mission to the Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma.

The Mission, as it is now, with the ownership by the Kansas State Historical Society, the management by the City of Fairway and the support of hundreds of volunteers with the Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation, is in a prime position to offer educational and research opportunities to citizens all over the United States.

It does welcome visitors from all over the United States and they learn the many layers of the history which the almost 200 year old buildings have witnessed. Because the Mission is owned by the state, it is all inclusive. Anyone can visit during the hours the Mission is open. This includes school field trips, scholars doing research in the library, neighborhood groups, gardeners and shoppers who want a unique gift. The activities at the Mission are numerous and the list of groups who are involved is huge. Among some of the volunteer groups are Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Questers, DAR, Master Gardeners, Bishop Miede students, neighbors, Native Americans, Free Traders, Haskell, Urban Artists and history reenactors. The Mission attracts more visitors than any of the other State Historical Society sites in Kansas. There is not a good reason to sever all of these relationships.

The Mission reached out to Chief Barnes. He was given a seat on the board but he chose to actively acquire the land instead. Chief Barnes has never shown any interest in the history of Shawnee Indian Mission and may not understand any of the history beyond the short years that it was a school. The Foundation is now working with Native Americans from many of the 22 tribes who had students at the Mission and would welcome working with Chief Barnes also.

I would invite you to make a personal visit to the Mission to make your own decision about the best ownership of this property. When other Committee Members have visited, they have been surprised to find a vibrant, historical treasure that is loved and cared for by the Greater Kansas City community. The only reason this historical site remains is due to the rescue by the State Historical Society and the community in the 1920s

Sincerely,

Jane E Hess

Cheryl Baker

From: Kathy <khoo99@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 10:53 PM
To: House Fed-State Affairs
Subject: HB 2384
Attachments: Shawnee Indian Mission.pdf

It is vitally important to the State of Kansas, Johnson County, City of Fairway and the community of concerned citizens that ownership of the Shawnee Indian Mission not be conveyed to the Shawnee Tribe(s) in Oklahoma.

Please see the attached file.

Sincerely,

Kathy S. Hood
9809 W 145th Street
Overland Park, KS 66221

I have been involved with the Shawnee Indian Mission for over 10 years. As a member of the Johnson County Young Matrons, a 501c3 organization, I participate in the Trails through the Mission educational program which teaches fourth grade children the history of the Mission and its significance to the Oregon Trail.

It is obvious when working with Jennifer Laughlin, the Site Director, fellow volunteers and the neighbors surrounding the mission, that everyone involved is dedicated to its continued success.

My concern with turning the Mission over to the Shawnee Tribe is threefold:

The Mission would no longer be available to the Johnson County Public School System for educational programs like Trails through the Mission.

Johnson County would lose its only National Historical Landmark.

The State of Kansas, Johnson County and City of Fairway would have no control over the use of the 12 acres and 3 buildings on the historical site.

I am urging the Legislature to deny conveyance of the Shawnee Indian Mission to the Shawnee Tribe(s).

Subject: Opposition to HB 2384 – Preservation of the Shawnee Indian Mission

Dear Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 2384, which seeks to convey the Shawnee Indian Mission to one of three present-day Shawnee Tribes located in Oklahoma. As a Kansas State Historic Site and the only National Historic Landmark in Johnson County, the Mission holds immense historical, educational, and cultural significance that must be preserved for future generations.

This site is not only a vital link to the histories of the 22 tribes whose children attended the school but also a cornerstone in understanding Kansas Statehood, Bleeding Kansas, the Trails West, and the Civil War. Transferring ownership of the Mission to an out-of-state entity could result in restricted public access, jeopardizing the preservation of these critical stories and artifacts.

Additionally, without clear protections, there is no assurance that the land will remain a historic landmark under the Shawnee Tribe's jurisdiction. The possibility of sovereignty claims could remove state and local oversight, leading to uncertain future uses that may not align with its current role as an educational institution. The Mission serves as an irreplaceable resource for Kansans and beyond, offering fact-based historical education that benefits students, researchers, and the broader community.

The conveyance of this landmark would be an irreversible decision with significant consequences. I urge you to oppose HB 2384 and support the continued stewardship of the Shawnee Indian Mission by the State of Kansas to ensure its accessibility and preservation for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mallorie Hurlbert

Resident, educator, and visitor to the Shawnee Indian Mission

To the Kansas legislators considering conveyance,

As a 28 year resident of Fairway, KS I am utterly confounded that our state legislature would even take up discussion on such a preposterous idea as ceding control of a historical site to an entity such as the Shawnee tribe with little connection to our local community. The conversation continues despite opposition voiced by so many varied parties opposed to this idea.

I expect that you and our other representatives will take action to ensure that all voices are heard. I am gratified to see so many groups voice their opposition to this "conveyance".

I am an organizer of a Christmas Tree sale on the Shawnee Indian Mission site for the last 11 years, an event that draws thousands of people from around the area and raises money for both the site and for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to help pay for their scouting activities.

Not only do I have concerns as a resident of the neighborhood but also as a stakeholder in a community that strives to stay close to one another and build lasting relationships.

Jeff

Jeff Johnson 5425 Windsor Lane, Fairway, KS 913 660 5188

February 20, 2025

RE: Testimony **Opposing HB 2384** Conveyance of State-Owned Land to an Out-of-State Entity

Dear Representative Kessler and Members of the Committee,

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." — George Santayana

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to the transfer of this historically significant state-owned land to an out-of-state entity. I urge you to reject this conveyance, as it would undoubtedly result in the irreversible loss of an incredibly rich historical resource that embodies the complex and deeply significant stories of Kansas' past.

This land is not just a parcel of property in the middle of a residential neighborhood; it is a visibly profound symbol of a shared history— bearing witness to the experiences of many communities across generations. There have been countless school children, community members, and visiting tourists who have frequented the site for learning and coming together in recognition of our past.

There is not just one Native American tribe affected by this history. There are 22 tribes who sent children to the school located on this site. The current-day activities of this historical site have never attempted to erase cultures and languages. If anything, it has maintained the priority to ensure that voices from our past are not forgotten.

In addition to the history of our Native American tribes and Johnson County (The Rev. Thomas Johnson), numerous other Kansas historical events have taken place in the current buildings, on the grounds, and in the now-developed residential neighborhoods surrounding the historical site.

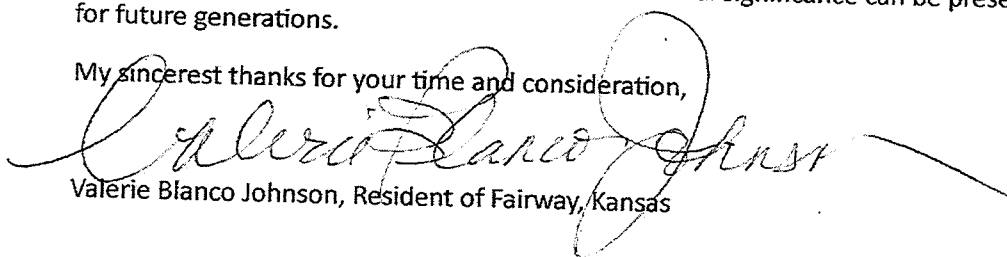
Kansas Statehood, Bleeding Kansas, Trails West, and the Civil War — This site played a crucial role in the dangerous and unknown period leading up to Kansas' statehood. It witnessed the violence of Bleeding Kansas, was a gateway to our Westward expansion, and was a place of shelter during our Civil War.

There is no restoration achieved if conveying this historical site to ONE entity, because this historical site encompasses a vast array of complex stories. This site houses a shared history on numerous levels. There continues to be an enormous opportunity to educate generations about our shared past. To transfer this land away from Kansas is to risk severing Kansas' shared historical narrative from future generations.

The historical passages connected to this place must be preserved and respected—not conveyed, or sold, to any one out-of-state entity with no sole stake in its cultural and historical importance.

I respectfully urge this committee to reject the conveyance and instead ensure that this land remains under state protection so that its historical and cultural significance can be preserved for all Kansans and for future generations.

My sincerest thanks for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie Blanco Johnson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Valerie Blanco Johnson, Resident of Fairway, Kansas

February 20, 2025

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the Kansas House Federal and State Affairs Committees:

As a proud 39 Year resident of Fairway Kansas (both homes in the original territory of the Shawnee Indian Mission) and a volunteer at the Shawnee Indian Mission research Library, I want to oppose the transfer of the Historic Site and National Historic Landmark to the Shawnee Tribe.

I feel we would lose the ability to share the rich history of the site that is now enjoyed by many people on an annual basis, including students in the Kansas City metro area. I began volunteering at the Mission because I did not fully understand the history and I was worried that we might be harboring "one of those" Indian boarding schools that have such a bad reputation. I came to learn of the three-part pact between Chief Fish, The Methodist church and the US government. Indian students came willingly to learn to read, write and to learn a trade. No one had to cut their hair or change their name. They learned along with the family of the staff. It was a true partnership.

The future of this property can't be guaranteed if it were to be conveyed to the Shawnee Tribe lead by Chief Barnes. He is disingenuous and has ties to casinos in Oklahoma. Once they claim sovereignty, the State and city of Fairway, who currently pay the bills and oversee its upkeep, would no longer be able to guarantee that it would remain available for many to enjoy the rich history that has taken place on this Historical Site. Mr. Barnes has closed down the Shawnee Cultural center in Miami, OK. What is to say he wouldn't do the same at the Shawnee Mission? He has put out numerous falsehoods about the Mission in the media trying to discredit the level responsibility the city and state have for caretaking. Can you imagine a possible Casino rising up in this small pastoral site in the heart of our city? Next to St Agnes church? And in the backyards of numerous homes?

The Shawnee Indian Mission is a crown jewel in the city of Fairway. My sons grew up playing in the creek and attending the annual Fall festival. I have walked my dogs past it daily. The SIM foundation has done a fabulous job offering outreach with speakers and events on a regular basis. There is so much love in our community for Mission.

Please vote no and do not advance this bill. My natural inclination of wanting land given back to those who it was taken from does not come into play for this situation. This land was freely given to establish a school for Indian students. The best way for this property to continue educating the public on the numerous significant historic events would be to leave it in the hands of the State Historical Society and the City of Fairway.

Sincerely,

Sarah Cunningham Jurcyk