

1/22/24

Honorable House Federal and State Affairs Committee Members:

The Shawnee Indian Mission is a site of historic significance that should be kept available to the public and not be given to the Shawnee tribe, which is what HB 2208 would do. There were other tribes inhabited this site before the Shawnees came to this area and children from 22 different tribes who attended the school. Why single out one tribe to control this site, the only one in Johnson County to be deemed a National Historic Site?

Chief Barnes and the Shawnee Tribe cannot commit or guarantee that this site will remain open to the public or that the buildings will remain standing. The tribe could easily claim sovereignty over the land for its own purposes. Thus, the public would be deprived of experiencing our history and visiting the area where some of the most significant events in the state's history took place—the westward expansion, Bleeding Kansas, the Civil War, and our very statehood.

Giving the mission to the Shawnee Tribe would mean giving away educational opportunities for generations to come. Please keep the mission under the aegis of the State of Kansas and the City of Fairway, who have been fine stewards of this piece of our history.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

Loring Leifer  
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