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Patrick Zollner, Executive Director

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Kansas Historical Society
Testimony to
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Senate Bill 473
March 4, 2026

This bill would eliminate previous legislation that prevented Audubon of Kansas from transferring the 30 acres known as Mount Mitchell, which was formally owned by the Kansas State Historical Society after being bequeathed to the Society by William Mitchell in 1953. It is our understanding that the intent of this legislation is to allow transfer of the property to the Prairie Guards, a group that over the past 20 years has been an admirable steward of the property by acquiring the surrounding 134 acres and by developing the land into an interpretive park for use by the public. It is also our understanding that at our request, they and/or Audubon of Kansas agree to place protective conservation easements on the property in perpetuity for the 30 acres originally bequeathed to the Kansas Historical Society. The legislation does not explicitly state this, however, and we would prefer that the legislation require the donation of a preservation easement in perpetuity to the Kansas Historical Society before the property can be transferred. The proposed legislation does provide the Kansas State Historical Society with the power to approve any transfer so it may be possible to accomplish the intent through the legislation as proposed.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

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