

HB 2662 Testimony

The following testimony will be presented by Mary McCurry, Chairman, Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation

Background and Historical Information on the Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation

Mary Alice Lair, a long-term KSF Board member from Chanute, developed the idea to charter the Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation after visiting other state fairs with Foundations that provided a philanthropic avenue to raise money for their fairs. It was overwhelmingly evident that those fairs with a charitable foundation associated with them could make much more significant improvements to their fairgrounds. They combined the power of philanthropic funds with the limited public funds available to significantly expand the number of enhancements to their fairgrounds.

In 2003, Mary Alice Lair helped put together a group of people from across the State who love the Kansas State Fair to form the Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation.

Officially, the Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation was incorporated as a nonprofit in Kansas on August 27, 2003, and then received its 501(c)3 charitable designation from the IRS on April 28, 2004. In 2021, the Foundation bylaws changed to include the three officers from the Kansas State Fair Board and a representative of the KSF Grand Drive committee as voting directors on the Foundation Board. To date, more than 40 people have served as directors on the Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation Board.

Foundation building and improvement projects started on the Kansas State Fairgrounds in 2004 when the Foundation installed an interactive water fountain (splash pad). This attraction has become a favorite stop for children each year at the Fair. From 2005 to 2012, the Foundation focused primarily on small improvement projects that were needed but outside the State Fair's capital improvement budget at the request of the Kansas State Fair Board. Things such as lighting improvements, new sidewalks, and livestock panels, to name a few. In 2013, the Foundation accepted the challenge to build what is now referred to as the Lair White House, a 2-story structure that resembles a home. This building was dedicated in 2014, with the first floor as home to

the Kansas State Fair Museum and the second floor as a place to host sponsor and dignitary receptions and hospitality. While the 2nd floor is still used for hospitalities and receptions, it is also the location of the Foundation's office. If you've attended the Kansas State Fair legislative luncheon in the last several years, it's been held under a tent in the backyard of the Lair White House.

From 2015 to 2022, the Foundation again focused primarily on many small-scale projects at the request of the State Fair Board, including big fans in the livestock barns, birthing center pens, and information center signage improvements. In 2020, when the Kansas State Fair was canceled due to COVID restrictions, the Foundation provided an avenue of financial support directly for the Fair.

From 2021 to 2023, while still doing a few small projects, the Foundation partnered with the Kansas Cooperative Council and cooperatives from across the region for the Capper Project. This project included a complete rebuild of the House of Capper in the same architectural style and design and the development and installation of the Capper Cooperative Park. The House of Capper, prior to the rebuild, was the second oldest structure on the Fairgrounds and was named for former Kansas Governor and US Senator Arthur Capper who, while governor, donated his private funds for the original building. As a US Senator, he authored the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922 which provided for the establishment of cooperatives in the United States. The Capper Project brought the House of Capper back to its original brilliance as a centerpiece for the Kansas State Fair. The Capper Cooperative Park provides the only walk-through educational park in the United States that tells the story of cooperatives in America. This \$1.2M project on the Kansas State Fairgrounds was coordinated and funded wholly through the Foundation with charitable contributions primarily from cooperatives and individuals from across Kansas and in this region of the United States.