

Lavite reinstated in Prenzler's first act as Madison County Chairman

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE — The first action **Kurt Prenzler** will take on Monday after being sworn in as the new **Madison County Board chairman** will be to allow the superintendent of the veterans assistance commission to return to his office.

Prenzler lifted the 21-month ban of **Superintendent Brad Lavite** from entering the Madison County Administration Building, where his office is located, as well as other county properties.

“It’s time we allow him back into the building,” Prenzler said.

In March 2015, Lavite suffered a post-traumatic stress breakdown relating to his combat service. Police responded to an incident at his home and a video of his arrest was released.

A psychiatrist with the **St. Louis Veteran's Administration Medical Center** cleared Lavite to return to work. A child psychologist employed by the county disagreed and former county officials banned him from the building stating there were safety concerns for employees and the public.

“The previous administration claimed this was about public safety, but the reality is it was about much more,” Prenzler said. “I feel those in charge at the time wanted to diminish his character and keep him quiet because he was questioning cuts to VAC funding.”

Lavite, a major in the U.S. Army, served two combat tours during Operation Iraqi Freedom, was awarded a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. He sued the county to regain access to the building as well as be issued his salary.



The county tried to get the case dismissed, however an appellate court upheld the decision to pay his salary and his attorney's fees. Lavite also filed a violation of civil rights lawsuit, which remains in federal court.

County Board member **Mick Madison**, R-Bethalto, attended a rally and prayer vigil for Lavite in August. He said Prenzler's decision to allow the decorated war veteran back in the building was the right choice.

"I'm happy for Brad and his family," Madison said. "I'm sorry he had to go through this for as long as he did and I welcome him back with open arms."

Madison praised Lavite and said he knows he sacrificed a lot of his country and glad this chapter is over.

"It's been too long," he said. "Today is a new day, a fresh start."

Newly elected County Board member **Phil Chapman**, R-Highland, who is a U.S. Army veteran, said he was glad to see Prenzler take immediate action into allowing Lavite back into the Administration Building.

"I also look forward to restoring the funding for VAC before the cuts were made," Chapman said.

Veterans Assistance Commissions are formed by veterans' organizations within a county, and once formed, the Military Veterans Assistance Act requires that the county provide office space and approve a "reasonable budget" funded by either the county's general fund or a dedicated tax levy. Madison County establishes a levy for the VAC.

Lavite is set to return to his office at noon Monday.