



Dunstan, Kern ask Governor to Reconsider Changes to SIU Board of Trustees

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The chairmen of the two largest counties in Southern Illinois are asking Illinois Governor Pat Quinn to reconsider his decision to remove three area leaders from the Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees.

In a letter sent Monday (March 4), Madison County Chairman Alan J. Dunstan and St. Clair County Chairman Mark Kern address issues related to Quinn's removal of Alton attorney John Simmons, construction executive Mark Hinrichs of O'Fallon, and Ed Hightower, superintendent of the Edwardsville School District. Dunstan and Kern also request the governor meets with members of the Southern Illinois legislative delegation to resolve the issues.

Following is the text of the letter from Dunstan and Kern:

Dear Governor Quinn:

It is unfortunate that at a time when our attention should be devoted to the economic recovery of our area and the creation of jobs for our residents, we are forced to address an issue that negatively impacts our counties and a significant portion of Southern Illinois – the removal of John Simmons, Mark Hinrichs and Ed Hightower from the Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees.

Mr. Simmons, Mr. Hinrichs and Dr. Hightower are, collectively, outstanding citizens, leaders in their respective fields who have worked diligently and with integrity on behalf of our area and, specifically, Southern Illinois University. For those gentlemen to be summarily dismissed from the university's Board of Trustees, without cause or explanation, is an affront not only to them, but to the people of Southwestern Illinois, as well as the administration, faculty and students on the Edwardsville campus of Southern Illinois University.

As you are well aware, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is of particular importance to Madison and St. Clair Counties. It is the 'crown jewel' of our area's educational network and is the second largest employer in the metro-east region. As such, elected officials and community leaders pay particular attention to developments at the university, especially those which are disruptive and create negative impressions, as is the case with this issue.

As chairman of the Madison County and St. Clair County Boards, we ask that you meet with members of our area's legislative delegation to resolve this issue in a manner that ensures effective representation from our area on the Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees, effectively avoiding additional confrontations that are detrimental to our university and our area.

We would also ask you to reconsider your decision to remove Mr. Simmons, Mr. Hinrichs and Dr. Hightower from the Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees.

Our counties have been supportive of you during your tenure as governor. On behalf of the people of Madison and St. Clair counties, we ask for your support on this issue as well as its timely resolution.

If you would like to address this subject further, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Respectfully,

(signed)
Alan J. Dunstan
Mark Kern