

Madison County Treasurer and Chairman Candidate Slusser Opinions About Trash Problems and More

by Chris Slusser

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Dear Editor:

Every day, I drive to work between Wood River and Edwardsville on Highway 143, and as I pass 255, I begin to see all of the trash along the roadway. This continues on, all the way until Bender Hill Road, which leads back to the landfill. The trash along 255 between I-270 and Route 143 is also a major eye-sore in our community. Sadly, our

County Board Chairman has decided to place his own political interests ahead of actually solving this problem.



The public deserves to know the full story, which, as has become all too common, involves a politician (Kurt Prenzler) with conflicts of interests accepting donations from interested parties and then doing nothing. Enough is enough. There have been citizen complaints (including complaints from me) for a few years now. There is a small, but vocal group, led by citizens Rusty Wheat and Mike Wever, who have attended County Board Meetings, and have complained to surrounding municipalities, elected officials, state legislators, IDOT, etc.

Rusty has also led clean-up efforts to try and keep a large section along Route 143 clean. County Board Chairman Kurt Prenzler's response has been weak, consisting of photo-ops and band-aids. He has spent tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars to pay for small cleanup efforts that are ineffective at best. He shows up sometimes for photo-ops. Like politicians do. But as usual with Prenzler, his actions focus everywhere but the main issue, spending his time on public relations rather than real solutions.

One to two weeks after a clean-up effort, the roadways are full of trash once again. Why? Because the hundreds of trucks bringing trash to the landfill each day are spilling trash along the roadways. As county treasurer, I kept seeing taxpayer money being spent and the problem still getting worse. And I kept wondering, "Why aren't they addressing the source of the trash? Why aren't they holding the trash haulers accountable?"

I dug into the matter further, and found that around the time citizens started showing up to County Board meetings and complaining, Kurt Prenzler accepted a \$1,000 campaign donation from the primary trash hauler, in addition to a prior \$500 donation from the hauler. No wonder he kept quiet! Luckily, citizens have learned that with Prenzler, you really need to follow the money. A local activist dug a bit, and was outraged to find out that Prenzler accepted this donation from the trash company while trash is piling up on roadways and citizens are demanding action. He confronted Mr. Prenzler via telephone and demanded that he return the donation or he would go public with the information. Only then did Mr. Prenzler agree to return the \$1,000 donation (but not the previous \$500 donation). He returned the donation 4 months after the fact. I'm guessing if no one had raised the issue, he would've never returned the funds.

The trash situation created by these trash haulers has created a crisis situation, especially for those who live along Route 143. Instead of holding the trash haulers accountable, Mr. Prenzler accepted money, and then to add insult to injury, used taxpayer funds to clean up their mess. To this day, Mr. Prenzler has yet to utter a single word of criticism to the polluters. Now you know why. I'm running for Chairman to get our local economy booming. Conflicts of interest, and ethical lapses, harm our future. They also prevent real problems from being solved, problems like trash on highways. When I'm Chairman, I won't spin my wheels and send out self-serving press releases. I'll actually coordinate the County's resources and personnel to make real long-term progress on this issue. And I'll hold polluters accountable, no matter their financial resources.

We need clean roadways, and we need clean government. Prenzler can't manage either. I will.

Sincerely,

**Chris Slusser, Madison County Treasurer &
Candidate for Madison County Board Chairman**

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