

# "This is a Lynching": Madison County Board Votes to Censure Kurt Prenzler

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
February 22 2024 12:30 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - Tensions were high at the Madison County Board meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024, when the Board voted to publicly censure County Chairman Kurt Prenzler following [allegations that he had been campaigning on county time and property.](#)

“This is a lynching with no due process” Prenzler said during the meeting.

Prenzler allegedly handed out campaign cards to a vendor and an assistant state's attorney on two separate occasions while on county time and property. Upon investigation, Prenzler was found in violation by Ethics Advisor Bruce Mattea, based on concerns that he was electioneering on county time and property.

In an earlier meeting on Feb. 21, 2024, the Executive Committee voted to recommend a censure to the County Board. Bobby Ross and Ryan Kneedler were the lone "no" votes, with Chris Guy and Dalton Gray absent from the Executive Committee meeting.

During the meeting of the full County Board, Mick Madison, Chairman Pro Tem of the Executive Committee, gave the committee's recommendation for a censure. He noted that Prenzler has apologized for his actions.

"The Chairman has admitted that he handed those out, says it's a mistake, and I appreciate that," Madison said. "However, he's gone out in public and he then goes on to say, 'This is a political opponent that's doing this to him. It's a witch hunt. It's the Madison County Board that's doing this.' And that's what has led me to want to vote for a censure on the chairman. That is basically our only action that we can take."

Madison defined a censure as "a harsh public rebuke" and pointed out that a county employee who "did the same thing" would be subject to a fine between \$1,000-2,500 and up to 364 days in jail.

Prenzler responded with a prepared statement in which he argued the Executive Committee and others were making "a mountain out of a molehill."

"After last month's meeting of the Executive Committee, the 40 minutes devoted to this matter, I thought it was over," Prenzler said. "For the Executive Committee to bring this up again just underscores the intent of some to, indeed, make a mountain out of this molehill. That's my first point: This is making a mountain out of a molehill. My second point is it's not fair."

Prenzler brought out images from Madison County Treasurer Chris Slusser's campaign website. Slusser is running against Prenzler for the County Chairman seat. Prenzler noted that the website uses "county employees, property, etc." in images, which were staged and "taken from a location not available to the public" on "compensated work time" with a "confidential bank account visible" in one image.

Prenzler said both he and County Board member Paul Nicolussi brought this matter to Mattea's attention, but State's Attorney Tom Haine told Mattea not to answer the questions posed by Prenzler and Nicolussi. He also noted that Haine's campaign committee has made "the largest contribution" of \$10,000 to Slusser's campaign.

"Tom Haine should have recused himself on this matter long ago," Prenzler added. "After this meeting, in the grocery store, it's likely that someone will recognize me and say, 'Kurt, what they're doing to you is just unfair.' That's all I have to say."

Madison noted that Mattea gave campaign contributions to Prenzler as well. Board member Michael "Doc" Holliday asked if the censure would be an article in the paper, and Prenzler responded that it was "going to be a headline."

"This is exactly what we're talking about, Kurt," Board member Mike Babcock said. "You are constantly poking people in the eye. You just basically slandered our state's attorney's name. You slandered him."

A few board members called for a vote, and Prenzler responded there was time for more conversation. Nicolussi said there were a few "inconsistencies" in the resolution. He noted that the vendor did not feel pressured to vote for Prenzler, so "mentioning the concept of quid pro quo was just not really relevant." Nicolussi added that the assistant state's attorney did not report the incident until a few months ago despite it allegedly happening over a year ago. While the term "pattern" was used in the resolution, Nicolussi said, Prenzler had only given out two cards in the decade he has been in public office.

"This is a lynching mob," Board member John Janek added. "These people who call themselves Republicans have turned into Democrats, and they know who they are."

Ultimately, the motion to censure Prenzler carried. Frank Dickerson, Valerie Doucleff, Michael Turner, Bob Meyer, John Janek and Paul Nicolussi voted no, with Bobby Ross and Shawndell Wilson abstaining. Dalton Gray, Nick Petrillo, Charles "Skip" Schmi and Chris Guy were absent from the vote.