

Dunstan responds to Prenzler, cites public safety and fiscal responsibility

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EDWARDSVILLE – Madison County Chairman Alan J. Dunstan responded to a release by **Kurt Prenzler** calling for further reductions in the county's property tax levy. Dunstan announced this week a 2.3 percent reduction in for the county portion of the property tax bill.

Dunstan said he and the Madison County Board have a demonstrated a strong record of fiscal responsibility and that Prenzler's proposal will jeopardize services and compromise public safety programs.

Dunstan said he and the County Board have managed the county in a fiscally responsible way. Madison County Government is 100 percent debt free, has maintained itself year in and year out in a strong financial position, and enjoys an outstanding bond rating.

"Unlike the state and federal government, we operate within our means. To help sustain this status, we have streamlined county government. When I became Chairman, we had 1,262 county employees. Today we have 945, a reduction of 322 employees and 25 percent of our workforce. We did this through careful and deliberate cost reductions without jeopardizing public safety and services our taxpayers demand," he said.

"We will lower property taxes again in 2016 which will result in a drop in a homeowner's property tax bill for the county portion of taxes. Madison County Government will collect fewer property tax dollars today from homeowners than it did four years ago. This may be demonstrated by looking at Kurt Prenzler's own property tax bill. Kurt Prenzler's taxes to Madison County have dropped over the past four years. He paid \$499 for the 2011 tax year. In 2015, he paid \$491 for the county's portion of the property tax bill, a cut from 2011. In 2016, due to the tax levy reduction, his own property taxes will go down again," he continued.

Dunstan said he will continue to operate Madison County Government in a fiscally responsible way and continue to minimize its reliance on property taxes.

Lastly, there is great uncertainty in how the State of Illinois will deal with its budget imbalance and the fear is they may further withhold funds from the county and municipalities. Dunstan said Madison County is faced with the possibility of funding cuts from the state of Illinois. There is also a very real chance that once a budget deal is reached in Springfield, there will be some level of a property tax freeze for all local taxing districts. While a property tax freeze would provide much needed relief for property tax payers, it will put significant pressure on local governments' ability to maintain services without cuts to core services such as public safety.

Dunstan said it is fiscally responsible to view things over the long term and not a short term reactions to some politically motivated proposal to "cut more." "These are things we consider in managing the county. Do we want someone to pick up the phone at the Sheriff's office when someone calls or do we have a disaster response if a storm hits? We will not jeopardize public safety. We will not mismanage county government like Kurt Prenzler has mismanaged his own department, costing taxpayers millions of dollars (or at great expense to the taxpayers)," he said.

"We will not let Madison County become the State of Illinois and Kurt Prenzler would lead us in that direction. We have reduced property taxes, but in a responsible way. We

will continue to prudently view county finances over the long term and maintain fiscal responsibility for our taxpayers," he said.