

PRESS RELEASE

The Kiamichi Technology Center School District has the greatest respect for the citizens who have taken time out of their busy lives to serve as members of the Multi-County Grand Jury. Unfortunately, however, it is apparent that they have been misguided by the Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General. The Attorney General's office uses the Multi-County Grand Jury System for political rather than investigatory purposes to punish and intimidate those who will not bend to their political and partisan wishes. The Attorney General's Office, through the selective presentation of "evidence", guides and directs the Multi-County Grand jury to findings which serve their political ends, and slanders those who will not bend to their political demands.

The simple fact is that the Attorney General's Office, in league with powerful state legislators, has attempted to intimidate the elected representatives of Southeast Oklahoma who comprise the Board of Education of Kiamichi Technology Center School District. During the administration of Gregory Zane Winters the Kiamichi Technology Center was used by those legislators as a source of political patronage jobs for friends and relatives. The current Board of Education has refused to continue that practice, and insists that employment decisions be made on the basis of merit, rather than familial or business relationships.

If the Attorney General's office is truly interested in finding a "culture of corruption", it need only look to its own relationship with those legislators who have stirred this pot. A simple examination of those family and friends of legislators who received positions in Kiamichi Technology Center under the administration of Gregory Zane Winters will readily indicate the patronage practices rejected by those the Attorney General's office now seeks to intimidate.

It is claimed in the Final Report that the termination of Gregory Zane Winters and the then-

counsel for the District was due to testimony they gave before the Grand Jury. Those exact charges were brought by the Attorney General's Office against members of the Board in Latimer County District Court. The Attorney General's Office put on **all** of the evidence it claimed supported such allegations. The District Court summarily dismissed those claims against **all** Board Members charged as having **no foundation whatsoever in fact**.

It is claimed in the Final Report that a Board Member used Kiamichi District equipment in support of his political campaign. Those exact charges were brought against the Board Member in question in both Atoka and Latimer counties by the Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General's Office put on **all** of the evidence it claimed supported such allegations. The District Courts of **both** Atoka and Latimer Counties again summarily dismissed those claims as having **no foundation whatsoever in fact**.

It is claimed in the Final Report that a member of the administration of the Kiamichi District used District equipment in support of a candidate for the Board of Education. Those exact charges were brought against the administrator in question in both Atoka and Latimer counties by the Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General's Office again put on **all** of the evidence it claimed supported such allegations. The District Courts of **both** Atoka and Latimer Counties again summarily dismissed those claims as having **no foundation whatsoever in fact**.

It is noted in the Final Report that this is the second Multi-County Grand Jury to issue an indictment alleging misuse of District property in support of a political campaign. That is true. What the Final Report fails to note, however, and what undoubtedly the Attorney General's Office failed to disclose to the Grand Jury, was that the prior charge, filed in the District Court of Leflore County, was **unanimously** rejected by a jury after consideration of the evidence after less than 10 minutes of deliberation, as having **no foundation whatsoever in fact**.

Isn't it curious that each time the Attorney General's Office makes such claims, over a period of years, in at least 3 different courts, before different juries and/or judges, that they are summarily rejected? Could it just possibly be that these charges are brought for political reasons? **The answer to these questions is obvious.**

The Final Report commends Gregory Zane Winters, former superintendent. That commendation is understandable in light of the selective evidence presented by the Attorney General's Office to the Grand Jury. The Attorney General's Office never presented to the Grand Jury the admitted testimony of Dr. Winters that it was he, not others, who permitted the use of school equipment to advance partisan political interests. The Attorney General's Office never presented to the Grand Jury any of the evidence that led to the termination of Gregory Zane Winters **for cause**. Such evidence was not made known to the Grand Jury for their consideration because it would not have advanced the personal interests of those who wished to return the Kiamichi District to a source of political patronage jobs and the "good-old boy" days that the powerful would like to see returned to Eastern Oklahoma.

The members of the Board of Education of Kiamichi Technology Center School District will continue to do their best to ensure quality education for the students of the District, irrespective of the retribution and attempted intimidation by the powerful. Their students, and the citizens of Eastern Oklahoma, deserve no less.