

ERIC JOHNSON



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July 7, 2014

Mr. Paul L. Foster
Chairman of the Board of Regents
The University of Texas System
601 Colorado Street
Austin, TX 78701-2982

Dear Chairman Foster:

I am appalled by what I have read about the status of The University of Texas at Austin's President Bill Powers in various media outlets. I would have assumed that The University of Texas System's Board of Regents and its chancellor would have had in place a process for the removal of a university president that did not involve his or her public humiliation.

For a university system chancellor to confront the president of one of our state's flagship universities with such a brutish ultimatum as the one being reported in newspapers across the nation is absurd and embarrassing. If, in fact, it is time for new leadership at The University of Texas at Austin, then a transition plan including a sensible resignation date for President Powers, the selection of an interim president (if President Powers is not to stay on until his successor takes over), and the naming of a reputable search committee all should have occurred before any word of President Powers' impending departure became public.

The unprofessional and amateurish behavior on display for the nation's higher education community to see is doing real and perhaps irreparable damage to the prestige of one of our state's premier academic institutions. How can we hope to recruit the best talent to lead our state's public universities if this is how they might be forced out?

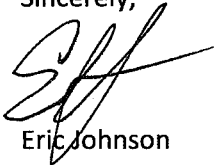
I am very much aware that personnel decisions with respect to our public universities lie with the respective boards of regents and not with the Legislature. I am not saying that President Powers should stay or that he should go. What I am saying is that, irrespective of how one feels about President Powers, this is not the way to go about firing the president of one of our state's finest academic institutions who also happens to be the president of the Association of American Universities. The way this situation has been handled reflects poorly on everyone involved, but the brunt of these errors will ultimately be borne by the people of Texas.

**COMMITTEES:**

NATURAL RESOURCES, VICE-CHAIR • GENERAL INVESTIGATING AND ETHICS, VICE-CHAIR
ELECTIONS • SELECT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPARENCY IN STATE AGENCY OPERATIONS

I am calling on you and The University of Texas System Board of Regents to take immediate steps to rectify this situation. Allowing this media circus to continue will only lead to a further loss of confidence in the leadership of The University of Texas at Austin and a devastating loss of respect for The University of Texas System on the part of its students, staff, alumni, and countless supporters across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'E. Johnson', written over the printed name.

Eric Johnson
State Representative
District 100

CC: The Honorable Rick Perry, Governor of Texas
The Honorable David Dewhurst, Lieutenant Governor of Texas
The Honorable Joe Straus, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Carol Alvarado, Co-Chair, House Committee on Transparency in State Agency Operations
The Honorable Dan Flynn, Co-Chair, House Committee on Transparency in State Agency Operations
Hon. Kel Seliger, Chair, Senate Committee on Higher Education
Hon. Dan Branch, Chair, House Committee on Higher Education
Dr. Francisco Cigarroa, Chancellor, University of Texas System