

Move to block Bush institute at SMU fails: Complex should be complete by 2013

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A long-shot attempt to block a George W. Bush policy institute on the Southern Methodist University campus fell short at a regional United Methodist meeting in Dallas.

University president Gerald Turner praised the delegate votes July 17 to affirm deals that SMU and the church's Mission Council signed in 2007 with the George W. Bush Presidential Library Foundation to build a library, museum and policy institute on leased land.

Some United Methodist clergy and SMU faculty had argued that the integrity of the university and the denomination would be damaged by its limited influence over the institute.

A Chronicle of Higher Education blog said similar think tanks at other university-based presidential libraries are "integrated with their academic hosts." Under the deal, for instance, SMU may name one or two members of the policy institute's board of directors, but the foundation can veto those nominations.

The church's South Central Jurisdiction voted 158 to 118 against a petition to bar the institute from the presidential complex. Opponents still pondered whether to ask the denomination's Judicial Council if the lease of land to what they called "a partisan political think tank" would be a violation of church law.

Turner, saying that university officials had been assured that the arrangements were all proper, indicated that the Bush complex would be built by 2012 or 2013.