

## OPEN LETTER TO THE ILLINOIS CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION AND TO ILLINOIS PUBLIC OFFICIALS

We write to support the use of federal and state prisons, including the one at Thomson, IL, to house Guantanamo detainees pre-trial and post-conviction. We support trials for the detainees in our federal courts, which means that they must be brought to the U.S. to stand trial and thus must be housed in appropriate prisons in this country.

While we oppose military commissions and preventive detention, and thus also oppose using prison facilities in connection with these purposes, we strongly reject charges that our country's prisons cannot securely hold terrorism suspects or other dangerous individuals. In fact, these facilities have proven their ability to do just that; they currently hold approximately 195 individuals convicted of terrorism offenses in our federal courts. They also hold many other individuals convicted of extremely dangerous acts. No one has ever escaped from these secure facilities. Furthermore, the federal government can retrofit institutions such as Thomson to ensure that they meet the security standards that Illinois residents demand and deserve.

While we take no position on the economics of holding the detainees in the prison of any particular community, local leaders may well conclude that this course makes sense from an economic point of view. We have no doubt that, if these leaders reach this conclusion, they should not be deterred from going forward because of any safety and security concerns.

We urge the elected officials of Illinois to reject the irresponsible fear-mongering and partisan politics that have bogged down the inevitable, and necessary, closing of Guantanamo. We have joined with over 130 former federal prosecutors, judges, diplomats, Members of Congress, and other government officials from the Kennedy to the George W. Bush administrations, as well as foreign policy and national security experts, military and bar leaders, and family members of victims of the 9/11 attacks to sign *Beyond Guantanamo: A Bipartisan Declaration*, which supports trials in our federal courts for the Guantanamo detainees and future terrorism suspects, and opposes preventive detention.

The *Declaration* notes that, “[a]s it moves to close Guantanamo and develop policies for handling terrorism suspects going forward, the government should rely upon our established, traditional system of justice. We are confident that the government can preserve national security without resorting to sweeping and radical departures from an American constitutional tradition that has served us effectively for over two centuries.”

### SIGNATORIES:

**Abner J. Mikva**, Member of U.S. Congress (D-IL), 1969-1973, 1975-1979; White House Counsel, Clinton administration; Chief Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, 1979-1994

**Thomas P. Sullivan**, U.S. Attorney, Northern District of Illinois, 1977-1981; Former Co-Chair of the Illinois Governor's Commission on Capital Punishment, 2000-2008

**Dan K. Webb**, U.S. Attorney, Northern District of Illinois, 1981-1985

\*Affiliations are listed for identification purposes and do not imply the endorsement of the organizations with which the signatories are affiliated. For more information and a list of more than 130 signatories, including former members of Congress, federal judges and prosecutors, diplomats, bar leaders, high-level military and government officials, and family members of victims of 9/11, who have joined *Beyond Guantanamo: A Bipartisan Declaration*, please visit [www.constitutionproject.org](http://www.constitutionproject.org).