

Bush library, institute for SMU get support: Opponents raise ethical concerns

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A regional group of United Methodist bishops has affirmed the process surrounding the possible placement of President George W. Bush's library and policy center on the grounds of Southern Methodist University.

The bishops, who represent United Methodists in the south central United States, adopted a resolution February 5 at a quarterly meeting with SMU president Gerald Turner. The resolution praised Turner's "careful stewardship and advocacy of the historic relationship between the university and the church."

On February 7, professors at SMU voted down a proposal to hold a full-faculty referendum on whether the campus should house a Bush institute as part of the overall presidential library complex.

SMU is a private university with 11,000 students. The project will be financed with a private fund drive aimed at raising at least \$200 million.

President Bush and his wife, Laura, are members of a United Methodist congregation in Dallas, and the First Lady sits on the SMU board of trustees.

The controversy over whether Bush's library should be located on the school's Dallas campus has been fueled by critics who say the privately funded policy institute could associate the Methodist name with a partisan public relations enterprise.

Opponents of the library have posted an online petition with more than 10,000 signatures and voiced concerns that Bush's management of the "war on terror" clashes with the denomination's ethical principles.

"We understand the controversy involved in this proposal," the bishops said in their resolution. "Our action today is focused on the process SMU has been engaged in. SMU has been forthcoming and transparent in its dealings and communication with

us." -*Religion News Service*