

Town Hall Meeting Held On Guantanamo

(KAIR)--It was standing room only at Leavenworth's Riverfront Community Center Thursday afternoon as about 200 people gathered to voice their opinion on the potential transfer of prisoners from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to Fort Leavenworth.

Governor Sam Brownback, State Senator Steve Fitzgerald, and other community leaders were present, all voicing their opposition to the possible move. Leavenworth Mayor Lisa Weakley cited several issues raised by the local community. She said "the City Commission, the Mayor, and also many of our citizens have concerns. Our primary concerns are of course, security to our citizens and the surrounding metropolitan area, and then also too, on a larger scale, the negative economic impact that this will bring to our community. And let me say from the get-go, that this does not imply that we lack faith in the mission of Fort Leavenworth to do this mission. We do not want this mission."

Governor Brownback told the crowd that while Gitmo has become the focus of protest regarding the treatment of prisoners there, a move would just shift the focus of those protests to the Leavenworth area, and he does not want that. He added that bringing these types of prisoners to Fort Leavenworth would change the mission of the facility unnecessarily, saying that "this has been a secure facility that has worked. Now we are towards the end of an administration, and these can be very testy and difficult times because an administration, a lot of times, will try to just put things in and say okay...make your guys fight your way out and see if it can last. So we need to push back, and push back aggressively."

Fitzgerald stated that there would be no upside to moving Gitmo prisoners to Ft. Leavenworth. He said "we are taking a risk that is of monumental proportions. If we lose, and they do it...and the reason for taking that risk is...there is no upside. There is no advantage to the United States or its national interests in moving these people out of Guantanamo Bay."

The majority of the crowd showed their support against the move, with some citing personal connections to loved ones lost in the war against terror.

Brownback joined South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley recently in sending a letter to Defense Secretary Ash Carter vowing to take any action within their power to make certain no detainees are transferred.

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