



October 6, 2025

President Kelly Damphousse
Texas State University
601 University Drive
J.C. Kellam, Room 1020
San Marcos, Texas 78666

Re: *Professor Thomas Alter II / Rule 4.53 Response*

Dear President Damphousse:

As you know, on September 10, Dr. Thomas Alter (“Dr. Alter”) was notified that he was summarily dismissed. His dismissal was based on a “complaint” that was made against him for “participation at a recent conference,” and as a result, Dr. Alter engaged in conduct that “jeopardize[d] the health and safety of [the] university community” and “reflects inappropriate and poor judgment as a faculty member at Texas State University.” In your public statement, you accused Dr. Alter of “conduct that advocates for inciting violence,” and later, “criminal activity.”

Dr. Alter, a mild-mannered professor deemed worthy of tenure just this past May, was forced to pursue legal action to enforce his due process rights under the Texas and United States Constitutions, Texas state law, and the University’s own rules and regulations. Meanwhile, the University attempted a do-over of its deficient September 10 notice, and now claims that at this conference, Dr. Alter “discussed [his] employment with Texas State University, the University’s role in training future public school teachers, and [his] role, specifically, in teaching education majors, while promoting [his] vision for the recruitment of Americans into a ‘Revolutionary Socialist Party’ with the stated goal of overthrowing the United States government.” These statements, according to the University, “undermine students’ and the public’s confidence in Texas State’s academic neutrality and integrity, jeopardize the trust essential to [his] role in educating and mentoring students, and violate TSUS rules and regulations relating to employee speech and political activities,” specifically Chapter V, paragraphs 4.74 and 4.75 of the Rules and Regulations.

Neither notice sets forth personal or professional misconduct, let alone “serious” personal or professional misconduct that is required to support a summary dismissal. These notices instead mischaracterize the content and impact of Dr. Alter’s remarks and establish that Dr. Alter was terminated for speaking on matters of public concern, and in his personal capacity—in other words, First Amendment-protected speech.

A. The conference

On Sunday, September 7, Dr. Alter gave a talk as part of the online “Revolutionary Socialism Conference: Toward a Revolutionary Party.” Dr. Alter’s talk was during the session entitled “Building Revolutionary Organization Today.” Importantly, Dr. Alter was asked to give this talk because of his expertise in social movements, labor, and working-class history. Dr. Alter gave this talk remotely from his home, on his personal time. Dr. Alter was never identified as a faculty member or employee of Texas State University in the conference’s promotional materials. At the beginning of his presentation Dr. Alter identified himself as a member of his union and of Socialist Horizon-San Marcos.

Notably, the conference had a clear policy prohibiting recording or live-streaming the sessions. Despite

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this rule, and attendees' acknowledgment thereof, wannabe social media influencer Karlyn Borysenko lied about her identity and "infiltrated" the conference, recorded the sessions, and posted them to her YouTube¹ and Substack accounts. Presumably the "complaint" referenced in Dr. Alter's September 10 notice was from Borysenko, as she posted a subsequent video detailing her efforts to get Dr. Alter fired. Borysenko is a fascist grifter who makes outlandish claims to drive clicks and sell merchandise. Among Borysenko's views are that Jews chose to die in the Holocaust before they were born, and child rape is acceptable under certain circumstances. To say she is not a serious person would be charitable, and the idea that an institution of higher education would unquestioningly accept Borysenko as a credible source is both deeply troubling and embarrassing.

A. Dr. Alter's comments

A viewing of the conference shows that Dr. Alter did not discuss his employment, the University's role in training public school teachers, or his role in teaching education majors "while promoting" a vision for recruiting Americans into a revolutionary socialist party with the stated goal of overthrowing the United States government. The comments about Dr. Alter's affiliation with Texas State University occurred on a break between sessions and only at the prompting of another participant. Nor did Dr. Alter "advocate" for the overthrow of the United States government. Rather, he critiqued insurrectionary anarchists who reject organization while themselves advocating for the overthrow of the United States government. Dr. Alter asks of that movement, "without organization, how can anyone expect to overthrow ... the U.S. government?" While some of Dr. Alter's remarks were critical of the U.S. government, they were not a call to arms. They were, instead, emblematic of the type of speech that enjoys First Amendment protection.

Also, "revolution" has a number of meanings. In his talk Dr. Alter spoke of how such a "revolution" would occur, invoking Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*. But *The Communist Manifesto* does not call for "violence" or "criminal activity"; rather, it commends its readers to bring together the various struggles of the working class to form one common struggle for economic democracy and reforms that would empower the working class. This is why Dr. Alter ultimately suggested that people join union picket lines and protect transgender rights, rather than engage in armed rebellion. In fact, Dr. Alter's views on revolutionary socialism are neither incendiary nor surprising, as they are detailed in his book, *Toward a Cooperative Commonwealth: The Transplanted Roots of Farmer-Labor Radicalism in Texas*.

B. Grounds do not exist for Dr. Alter's summary dismissal

Incredibly, the September 23 notice accuses Dr. Alter of "promoting [his] vision for recruitment of Americans" into a Revolutionary Socialist Party. This is blatantly inaccurate; in fact, Dr. Alter acknowledges that the country is not currently in a revolutionary situation and that a revolutionary party doesn't even exist.

Dr. Alter was also accused of undermining academic neutrality and integrity. Setting aside the fact that his comments were not made in an academic setting, neutrality in academia does not mean absence of ideas, philosophies, opinions, or analysis. Dr. Alter is known as a Marxist historian, and his teaching and historical analysis have been popular and attractive to students. His office hours are busy with undergraduate and graduate students who want to engage Dr. Alter on these topics and avenues of historical research. Dr. Alter is not aware of a single student complaint that he improperly presses his views on his students, which is notable in today's politically charged climate.

¹ Notably, the video referenced in the University's September 23 notice is no longer available, presumably because it was posted in violation of YouTube's user guidelines and terms of service.

The University's September 23 letter to Dr. Alter cites Sections 4.74 and 4.75 of the Rules and Regulations in support of Dr. Alter's termination. First, it appears that 4.75 applies to faculty who run for office in partisan elections, and is inapplicable on its face. Section 4.74 reaffirms that discipline is inappropriate where a faculty member speaks as a citizen upon a matter of public concern. The only content that comes close to being applicable is the reminder that "a faculty member *should* at all times be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, and [] show respect to the opinions of others." There is a reason this policy is not incorporated into Section 4.51's laundry list of "serious professional or personal misconduct" – by its terms it prohibits and requires nothing of faculty. Unlike the other policies referenced in that list that tell faculty what they "shall not" do, are "prohibited from" doing, or "must" do, Section 4.74 is suggestive at best. And assuming it does impose a requirement on faculty, Dr. Alter met it. He was accurate, he exercised appropriate restraint, and he was respectful of the opinions of others.

C. Conclusion

Dr. Alter and his family have made San Marcos and Texas State University their home; jeopardizing "the health and safety of the university community" or "inciting violence" is simply not something he would ever do. For Dr. Alter, one of the saddest things about his termination and violation of his free speech and due process rights is the negative attention it has drawn to Texas State University. He has, though, been heartened by the broad support he has received from the historical profession and first amendment advocates across the country.

I have included some representative letters of support:

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A	History Department Graduate Student Statement
B	Resolution of the East Texas Historical Association
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Thousands are waiting to see if the administration will side with politicians, internet trolls, and fascists, or come down on the side of free speech, academic freedom, due process, and respect for tenure. The academic reputation and public standing of Texas State University hang in the balance, and it is not too late to reverse course.

Dr. Alter respectfully requests that he be fully reinstated to the position of Associate Professor of History, with all associated rights and privileges. We look forward to meeting with you this afternoon.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Amanda L. Reichel

TAB A

History Department Graduate Student Statement

September 25, 2025

From the Courtyard of Taylor-Murphy:

The undersigned graduate students of the Texas State History Department are responding to the abrupt termination, without due process, of Dr. Tom Alter. We humbly request his immediate reinstatement. We write to inform you of this event's catastrophic impact on the Department's academic mission from our perspective. As graduate students, we work very closely with faculty. We believe we are uniquely positioned to provide an insight into how this has impacted us as members of the department. Also, as emerging historians, this censorship around academic expression is concerning.

First and foremost, the termination of Dr. Alter has left five master's graduate students without their thesis chair. The chair is responsible for guiding students on their projects and is required for students to complete their graduation requirements. Now, these students are forced to find alternate chairs who likely lack the same historical specialization and who are already chairing other students. Likewise, Alter's current graduate seminar is left rudderless. Twelve students who paid for their course are left without a professor. Alter's current undergrad Texas History class as well, which is a required class for those who are seeking their history teaching certification.

Secondly, as future academics who wish to continue engaging in historical scholarship, the University's censorship and termination is concerning. If what we say off-campus can be misinterpreted and used against us, where does that leave the future of public dialogue?

Finally, Dr. Tom Alter's termination has led to a wave of distress, uncertainty and fear. It is in these precise moments where Dr. Alter would provide valuable guidance and a listening ear to his graduate students, many of whom were only in the program because of him. He was always willing to provide academic and personal support. He is an excellent historian who earned his tenured position as a result of his scholarship, teaching record, and countless hours of service to the historical profession and Texas State community.

Signed,

Riley Apel	Katherine Frederick	Merisa Lee	Sabrina Vargas
Charlie Baker	Zoe Garrison	Anne Livingston	Andrew Ward
Nana Boamah	Sammu Glasc	Jillian Martinez	Ian Whitehead
Darrell J. Correia	Emma Gomez	Matthew Medina	Ainsley Williams
Adam Demshar	Bonnie Heitkamp-Kenner	Alejandra Navarrete	Evan Williams
Jude Drouillard	Katherine Johnson	Ally Rehmani	

TAB B

October 2, 2025

East Texas Historical Association

Resolution Regarding Academic Freedom
And The Recent Incident At Texas State University

We, the officers and board members of the East Texas Historical Association, as an assembled body and with a quorum for action, do, on October 2, 2025, express our concern and objection to both the general disregard for due process and academic freedom in its broadest forms and the specific dismissal of Thomas Alter, an Associate Professor of History, at Texas State University. Therefore, this Resolution will serve as a both a general affirmation of the Board of Directors and Officers of the East Texas Historical Association for the long-standard process of academic freedom in institutions of higher learning, the vital need for such freedom when scholars of such institutions are engaged in intellectual and scholarly pursuits, and the more specific denial of those freedoms by Texas State University and its president, Dr. Kelly Damohousse, acting in his official capacity.

Whereas, the East Texas Historical Association affirms and expresses its continued support for the concept of academic freedom on scholarly campuses as essential to a university's mission and role in a society that believes in and understands the concepts of liberty as defined by tradition and action throughout the life of this nation. Primarily, that employees of an institution of higher learning and educators are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties;

Whereas, educators are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, areas of research, and expertise, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject;

Whereas, such potential limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment;

Whereas, College and university professors are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution;

Whereas, the above tenets are fully compatible with and follow the long-standing statements and affirmations of the American Historical Association (AHA) and the Organization of American Historians (OAH) as the standards for the field;

Whereas, additionally, all employees of institutions of higher learning are assured, by statute and policy, of a specific due process concerning termination of employment;

Whereas, Texas State University's employment due process does vary by employee type, tenured faculty are protected by the Texas Education Code requiring written notice of allegations, a hearing, and a written determination for termination, while the Faculty Grievance Policy (AA/PPS 04.02.32) allows for grievances regarding contract non-renewal and termination. Also, Texas State University policy according to UPPS 04.04.40, which details the disciplinary process, including human resources consultation, investigation, and employee notification must be expressly followed;

Whereas, in both cases of the general concept of academic freedom and according to the due process as mandated by Texas State University, President Damphousse has not followed either prescribed procedure in dealing with the matter of Associate Professor Thomas Alter;

Whereas, a close study of Dr. Alter's remarks, which were spoken not in the course of his classroom teaching role or in any manner as an employee of Texas State University, but rather at an academic conference and not during a formal presentation but in a question-and-answer portion of a session, would reveal that he neither called for the actions as described by Dr. Damphousse's public statements or his explanation of the dismissal, or that Dr. Alter's spoken statement could be construed as inflammatory in the manner as reported by Dr. Damphousse;

Whereas, and most stridently, the dismissal of Dr. Alter is repugnant to both the concept of academic freedom within the profession and as a member of a scholarly community, as well as in violation of the specific employment policy of Texas State University;

Whereas and therefore, the Board of Directors of the East Texas Historical Association condemns these actions by Dr. Damphousse in his official capacity as President of Texas State University, and;

Whereas, we then call and pass this Resolution calling for Dr. Damphousse to reconsider his dismissal of Dr. Thomas Alter and also call for Dr. Alter's reinstatement to his position with no prejudice or negative recourse of action.

Executed this day of October 2, 2025 by the Board of Directors of the East Texas Historical Association.

M. Scott Sosebee, Executive Director

TAB C



President Kelly Damphousse
Office of the President
Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666

September 30, 2025

Dear President Damphousse,

On behalf of the Organization of American Historians, we write to reaffirm the essential principles of academic freedom, tenure, and shared governance. These ensure that scholars may pursue research and teaching without fear of reprisal for their ideas or speech. We are deeply concerned whenever universities appear to act outside established channels for evaluating faculty, because such actions threaten not only individual scholars but the integrity of the profession as a whole.

The [September 10, 2025, dismissal](#) of Associate Professor of History Thomas Alter from Texas State University raises our concern. While we support [Prof. Alter's reinstatement and pending due process hearing](#), the fundamental issue remains unresolved. Based on publicly available information, our understanding is that Prof. Alter was fired without recourse to established institutional channels for assessing charges against tenured faculty, after comments he made at a political gathering. Heightening our concern is that the website whose description of Alter's comments seemingly led to his dismissal included detailed descriptions of his scholarship on the history of socialist and agrarian activism as a justification for his dismissal. This raises troubling questions about whether constitutionally protected speech and academic integrity are being compromised.

The American Association of University Professors [1940 Statement on Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) states, that termination of a continuous appointment should, "be considered by both a faculty committee and the governing board of the institution." Exercising unilateral administrative action on faculty dismissals broadly threatens the principles of academic freedom—ensuring the liberty to conduct research and instruct students without fear or favor—that the tenure system is meant to protect. Faculty input through a robust system of shared governance is a core component of academic freedom.

As the largest professional organization in the country representing U.S. historians, the Organization of American Historians is dedicated to promoting excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of American history. As such, the OAH remains committed to defending academic freedom and shared

governance. We thus stand together with other professional and learned societies in urging university leaders everywhere to uphold due process and resist actions that could set damaging precedents for the academic profession.

Sincerely, on behalf of the Executive Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Annette Gordon-Reed". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Annette" being more prominent and the last name "Gordon-Reed" following in a similar style.

Annette Gordon-Reed

President, Organization of American Historians

TAB D

ADVOCACY & PUBLIC POLICY / SEP 23, 2025

AHA Sends Letter Objecting to Firing of Texas State University Professor

News Topic

Advocacy & Public Policy, Employment & Tenure

The AHA has sent a letter to Texas State University president Kelly Dampousse registering strong objection to the university's decision to terminate the employment of Dr. Thomas Alter without due process. "Dr. Alter was terminated for comments made outside of the context of his university employment and extraneous to his role as a teacher and historian," the AHA wrote. "Such unprofessional and capricious firing will hurt Texas State University's reputation as a reliable employer and as an institution that provides high-quality education for Texas's future leaders."

September 23, 2025

Dr. Kelly Dampousse, President
Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas 78666
Email: president@txstate.edu

Dear President Dampousse,

The American Historical Association writes to register its strong objection to Texas State University's decision to terminate the employment of Dr. Thomas Alter without due process. The university's action sets a dangerous precedent and undermines the principles of free inquiry that are at the core of the American system of public higher education. We urge Texas State University to abide by the legal foundations for faculty employment in Texas and to respect the rights of all faculty under the 5th and 14th Amendments of the US Constitution.

The AHA, with nearly 11,000 members, is the largest association of professional historians in the world. Our mission includes maintaining professional standards and ethics, promoting innovative scholarship and teaching, and ensuring academic freedom. The professional standards we articulate and promote are cited frequently inside and outside the academy. Prominent among those standards is the right of historians to express their opinions as private citizens without fear of institutional discipline.

Dr. Alter was terminated for comments made outside of the context of his university employment and extraneous to his role as a teacher and historian. This action is contrary to the norms and ethics of higher education in the United States and contrary to the mission of Texas State University.

Tenure is designed to fuel innovation. The protections it affords encourage faculty to continue challenging themselves and their students, pushing beyond easy answers or politically convenient ideas to consider new perspectives. Dr. Alter recently earned tenure at Texas State University, demonstrating that his colleagues, both nationally and at your institution, recognized his significant scholarly contributions and commitment to Texas State University and its students.

The 5th Amendment to the US Constitution guarantees that "No person . . . shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law," and the 14th Amendment guarantees those rights to all citizens. Despite recent legislative changes (introduced by Texas SB18 in 2023), Section 51.942 of the Texas Education Code and the university's own procedures confirm that this foundational constitutional principle applies to faculty tenure. Both the state and its public institutions of higher education are legally bound to respect the rights of tenured faculty to be notified of accusations against them and have the opportunity to respond in a hearing before an impartial administrator. This process is designed to guarantee that administrators do not rashly fire faculty without a full and fair investigation.

Texas State University did not follow these procedures. On September 7, 2025, Dr. Alter participated in a conference as a private citizen at an off-campus online venue, with no connection to the university. Soon after, a recording of his comments was posted on social media. In a public statement issued on September 10, the university announced the decision to terminate Dr. Alter "after a thorough review was conducted of the video recordings of the statements" posted on social media. The university has provided no evidence that its investigation extended beyond the original social media posts. It did not hold a hearing. Such a review fails to meet the legal requirements for due process outlined in the Texas Education Code.

Rejecting the idea that faculty should be able to consider and discuss challenging ideas strikes at the university's core values of supporting the "free exchange of ideas," practicing academic integrity, and serving the public good. The contention that Dr. Alter's comments are equivalent to "serious professional and personal misconduct" creates a chilling effect for any scholar and a litmus test for historical research and teaching. It will also negatively affect the intellectual atmosphere at Texas State University. Faculty will fear for their job security, persuaded that their institution lacks respect for the principles of academic freedom. A regimen of defensive self-censorship will diminish the intellectual rigor of lectures and classroom discussions, to the detriment of students. That the determination to terminate Dr. Alter's employment was made based on comments he made in a nonuniversity venue in his personal capacity heightens this chilling effect and inhibits scholars' full participation in civil society.

The primary purpose of academic tenure is to prevent the termination of faculty members solely for political or ideological reasons. The right to due process provides equally essential protections for a system dedicated to free expression. Violating both norms has alarming long-term implications. Such unprofessional and capricious firing will hurt Texas State University's reputation as a reliable employer and as an institution that provides high-quality education for Texas's future leaders.

We urge the university to reinstate Dr. Alter and to afford him the constitutional right to due process as required by state law.

TAB E

Statement by the Labor and Working-Class History Association on Academic Freedom and the Unjust Firing of Professor Thomas Alter

We, the Officers and Members of the Board of Directors of the Labor & Working-Class History Association (LAWCHA), condemn in the strongest terms the unjust firing of tenured Associate Professor of History Thomas Alter, a respected member of our organization, by Texas State University, San Marcos. Texas State University President Kelly Dampousse fired Professor Alter on September 10 without due process; he was given no opportunity to answer or rebut allegations directed against him.

Professor Alter was singled out for comments he made during a talk outside of the university on a weekend that had no connection to his employer. Although Professor Alter drew upon his academic expertise, this talk was not linked in any way to his work at the university. Most importantly, contrary to the university's accusation, his remarks did not call for and advocate violence; rather, he addressed in broad hypothetical terms the need for justice for working people and best strategies that might be followed to achieve it.

We are further disturbed by the implication made by [*Texas Scorecard*](#) that Professor Alter's scholarly writings constitute evidence of his unfitness to teach in Texas. Such policing of content violates Professor Alter's academic freedom and substitutes politicized opinion for evaluation by his peers, which had led to his tenure. The reliance on a spliced recording in this instance is a chilling reminder of the ways that distortions of speech can become vehicles to quell speech.

Without a hearing or adherence to other formal processes, this firing goes against the principles of academic freedom and employee rights that are central to higher education in a democracy. No university president should have the power to fire a scholar in this way. We stand with organizations committed to democracy and free speech, such as the AAUP, which [*condemns*](#) this act and other recent ones in Texas as "serious violations of well-established standards and principles of academic freedom and tenure."

As historians of labor and working-class history, we believe that an injury to one is an injury to all and see this unjust firing as not only the capricious condemnation and punishment of a respected scholar but a threat to the discipline of History itself.

Adopted unanimously by the officers and board members of the Labor and Working-Class History Association, September 12, 2025.

Author



[Rosemary Feurer](#)

Rosemary Feurer is Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She is the author of *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950*, among other books and essays. She is working on *The Illinois Mine Wars, 1860-1940* and a new biography of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones.

TAB F



AAUP President Condemns Political Firings of Texas Faculty, Calls for Reinstatements

[HOME](#) / [AAUP NEWS](#) /

AAUP PRESIDENT CONDEMNS POLITICAL FIRINGS OF TEXAS FACULTY, CALLS FOR REINSTATEMENTS

AAUP President Todd Wolfson released the following statement today:

The sudden firings of faculty members this week at Texas A&M University and Texas State University are serious violations of well-established standards and principles of academic freedom and tenure endorsed by the AAUP, the American Association of Colleges and Universities, and more than 280 other professional and educational organizations that have endorsed the AAUP–AAC&U 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*.

These firings set a dangerous new precedent for partisan interference in Texas higher education. Governor Greg Abbott and Texas lawmakers' clamor for the dismissal of professors who say things they disagree with amounts to government thought policing. Partisan intrusion into the classroom is censorship and fundamentally antithetical to academic freedom and the mission of higher education. When it is allowed to stand, colleges and universities will no longer serve their mission of seeking truth, educating our students, and promoting the common good: They will seek only to please the politically powerful and teach ideas the government approves. The forces behind this are making colleges and universities into the caricatures they have been drawing for years, places where people are punished for voicing ideas that are unpopular or "politically incorrect."

To protect faculty members from these pressures, the AAUP has since its founding in 1915 insisted that a faculty member may only be fired from their current appointment after they've had a hearing before an elected committee of their peers where the administration bears the burden of demonstrating that they are professionally unfit for their positions. The AAUP therefore calls on Texas A&M University and Texas State University to reverse these summary dismissals. Further, we condemn the removal of the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the chair of the English department at Texas A&M for supporting the academic freedom of an instructor as a draconian abuse of power.

The censorship of academic speech and entire fields of knowledge in service to an ideology poses an unprecedented danger to the future of higher education in the United States. The AAUP stands resolute in our core mission to advance and protect academic freedom and quality in education against these perverse and duplicitous political attacks.

Publication date

September 11, 2025

Join the AAUP

Help protect quality higher education and shape the future of our profession.

JOIN NOW

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TAB G



For Immediate Release

Texas State University Chapter
of the American Association of University Professors
(AAUP-TXST)

Statement Regarding the Assault on Academic Freedom
at Texas State University

SAN MARCOS, TX (Sept. 19, 2025) – The Texas State University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP-TXST) condemns Dr. Thomas Alter's termination and the manner in which it was carried out. His termination violated his First Amendment rights to free expression as a US citizen, his rights to academic freedom and free inquiry, and his rights to due process as a tenured professor as outlined by Texas State University policy. We demand his immediate reinstatement and call upon the leaders of our state and institution to cease attacks on our academic freedom.

Dr. Alter shared his political opinions in a public setting unconnected to his university duties. He did not, as the administration claims, incite violence. He urged listeners to “fight” politically and to engage in class “struggle,” but he specifically disagreed with “insurrectionists.” His statement was about the formation of a new political party to improve upon our current system. Dr. Alter’s comments were recorded and distributed on the internet by a self-described “anticommunist fascist.” Within days, as punishment for giving a public talk in his area of scholarly expertise and exercising his freedom of speech, Dr. Alter was terminated without due process.¹

We join with a crescendo of voices who have called for our colleague's reinstatement and restoration of dignity,² and we agree that the firing did not respect processes enacted by the Texas legislature or adopted by the Texas State University System (TSUS) Board of Regents.³ Beyond this specific case, the AAUP chapter at Texas State University expresses alarm at the broader destruction of academic freedom in our state and on our campus. These illegal and imprudent assaults on civil liberties must stop.

Today in Texas, longstanding AAUP principles are being trampled through legislation that undermines academic freedom and shared governance.⁴ Faculty Senates have been dissolved, and professors have been barred from involvement in the discipline of fellow faculty or hearing grievances filed by their peers.⁵ The full force of these policies came into effect on Sept. 1, and we can already see their devastating effects on university life.⁶ Unless AAUP principles are restored, faculty in Texas will remain vulnerable to vigilante-style attacks and will be deprived of due process by which they might defend themselves.⁷

Therefore, as a collective body the Texas State AAUP Chapter is making this appeal to restore academic freedom, shared governance, and civil liberties:

- We call upon Texas lawmakers to restore a deliberative process of shared governance and reverse their attacks on tenure.⁸
- We call upon trustees to cultivate deliberative institutional processes that respect their academic communities during crises of public pressure.
- And we call upon university administrations to seek counsel from faculty before implementing policies and decisions under these fraught circumstances.

AAUP guidance on Academic Freedom and Shared Governance was established in 1915. These original principles were revised in 1940 and codified in 1966 through a joint agreement with the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB).⁹ The AAUP insists that excellence in higher education depends on academic freedom; and that academic freedom in turn depends on shared governance and vigilant defense of due process.

AAUP principles recognize the “ultimate authority” of trustees, and the legitimate interest of the administration.¹⁰ Yet our principles insist that while “trustees hold an essential and highly honorable place,” professors “hold an independent place with quite equal responsibilities.” Indeed, within the context of “purely scientific and educational questions” faculty hold “the primary responsibility.” As the *1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure* puts it, professors “are the appointees, but not in any proper sense the employees” of trustees.¹¹

The AAUP believes that “In a democratic society freedom of speech is an indispensable right.”¹² Professors should not be fired for holding opinions. Faculty members are afforded significant protections for their expressions as individuals in public debates. Our *1940 Statement of Principles* declares that when we speak or write as individuals, “we should be free from institutional censorship or discipline.”¹³ Our *1964 Statement on Extramural Utterances* says that “a faculty member’s expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member’s unfitness to serve.” Moreover “a final decision should take into account the faculty member’s entire record as a teacher and scholar.” If the administration finds “weighty evidence of unfitness” then the charges should be presented to a hearing of faculty colleagues,¹⁴ but, as we noted above, the new law in Texas forbids faculty from carrying out their primary responsibility in the determination of faculty status.

Dr. Alter did not receive the due process that he would be entitled to according to AAUP principles, because those principles have been outlawed in Texas. The next professor who is targeted will also stand unprotected by principles that have governed our profession since 1915. Unless the legislature, trustees, and administrations change course, universities in Texas are doomed.

Contact: officer@txstateaaup.org

¹ Ryan Claycamp, “Texas State terminates history professor over comments made at conference,” Sept. 10, 2025. *University Star*. <https://universitystar.com/32736/news/texas-state-terminates-history-professor-over-comments-made-at-conference/>.

Gavin Escott, “A Tenured Professor Spoke Hypothetically About Overthrowing the Government. He Was Fired 3 Days Later,” Sept. 12, 2025. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/a-tenured-professor-spoke-hypothetically-about-overthrowing-the-government-he-was-fired-3-days-later>.

Ayden Runnels, “Texas State fires professor accused of trying to incite political violence in video,” updated Sept. 16, 2025. *The Texas Tribune*. <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/09/10/texas-state-university-professor-fired/>.

² “Reinstate Dr. Tom Alter, Defend Free Speech: Sign the Petition Now!” Texas State Employees Union, CWA Local 6186, <https://cwa-tseu.org/free-speech/>.

³ Alter v. TSUS, 5-6.

⁴ Jessica Priest and Sneha Day, “Bill to give political appointees more oversight over Texas universities wins final passage,” May 31, 2025, <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/05/24/texas-governing-boards-regents-senate-bill-37/>.

⁵ Daniel Perez. “UT regents OK faculty advisory groups as SB 37 abolishes senates at UTEP, system universities,” August 26, 2025, <https://elpasomatters.org/2025/08/26/utep-epcc-texas-tech-health-el-paso-sb-37-faculty-senates/>.

Texas Education Code, Sec. 51.9431, <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/Ed/htm/Ed.51.htm>.

⁶ Vimal Patel and J. David Goodman. “Texas Professor Fired After Accusations of Teaching ‘Gender Ideology,’” *New York Times*, Sept. 10, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/10/us/texas-professor-fired-gender-ideology.html>.

⁷ Nicholas Gutteridge, “Professors want to leave Texas because of tense political climate, survey says,” *Texas Tribune*, Sept. 5, 2025, <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/09/05/texas-faculty-university-political-climate-survey/>.

⁸ “In Wake of SB 18 Passage, Tenure Debacle Emerges at UT-Tyler,” Texas AFT, November 9, 2023, <https://www.texasaft.org/membership/higher-ed/in-wake-of-sb-18-passage-tenure-debacle-emerges-at-ut-tyler/>.

⁹ AAUP, *American Association of University Professors Policy Documents and Reports*, 12th ed., 2025, xi.

¹⁰ AAUP *Policy Documents*, 129.

¹¹ AAUP *Policy Documents*, 6.

¹² AAUP *Policy Documents*, 34

¹³ AAUP *Policy Documents*, 14.

¹⁴ AAUP *Policy Documents*, 34.”

TAB H



Canadian Committee on Labour History Comité Canadien sur L'histoire du Travail

Statement by the Canadian Committee on Labour History (CCLH) on Academic Freedom and the Unjust Firing of Professor Thomas Alter

We, the officers and Members of the Executive of the CCLH, condemn the unjust firing of tenured Associate Professor of History Thomas Alter by Texas State University, San Marcos. Texas State University President Kelly Dampousse fired Professor Alter on 10 September 2025 without due process; he was given no opportunity to answer or rebut allegations directed against him.

Professor Alter was singled out for comments he made during a weekend talk outside of the university at an event that had no connection with his employer. Although Professor Alter drew on his academic expertise, this talk was not linked in any way to his work at the university. Most importantly, contrary to the university's accusation, his remarks did not call for or advocate violence; rather he addressed in broad hypothetical terms, the need for justice for working people and the best strategies that might be involved in achieving it.

We are further disturbed by the allegation that Professor Alter's scholarly writings constitute evidence of his unfitness to teach in Texas. Such policing of content violates Professor Alter's academic freedom and substitutes politicized opinion for evaluation by his peers, which had already led to his tenure.

Without a hearing or adherence to other formal procedures, this firing goes against the principles of academic freedom and employee rights that are central to higher education in a democracy. No university president should have the power to fire a scholar in this way. We stand with other organizations committed to democracy and free speech in condemning this act. President Dampousse's decision to fire Professor Alter was apparently prompted by hearing a spliced recording made by an individual who did not receive Professor Alter's permission to record his remarks at the online conference. This is a chilling reminder of the ways that distortion of speech can become vehicles to squelch dialogue.

As scholars working in another country in the same general field as Professor Alter, we are impressed by his intellectual contributions to the study of labor, and are convinced that he is a valuable addition to Texas State University, where his expertise and commitment to teaching make important contributions. His unjust firing should be overturned, and Professor Alter reinstated as a member of the Texas State University faculty.