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As Austin's Population Continues to Grow, Voter Turnout Remains Stagnant

Austin, Texas – The report on *Austin Voter Turnout In Mayoral Elections, 1971-2006*, recently released by the Austin Community College Center for Public Policy and Political Studies, shows that in the three-decades since Austinites have been directly electing their mayors, voter turnout has been stagnant. Austin's population has nearly tripled and voter **registration** has grown by approximately 600 percent, but from 1971 (the first year Austin directly elected its mayor) to 2006, voter **turnout** only increased by 16 percent. So, while population and voter registration has grown, turnout in Austin has been relatively unchanged.

“Since 1971 average voter turnout has been around 60,699, even though our Austin population is at an all time high of 700,000. Further, in 10 of the 16 elections involved, turnout varied from the average by merely 1 to 9 percent,” stated Peck Young the Director of the ACC Center for Public Policy. “It is a sad statement on our democratic system when only 15 to 16 percent of our population is making decisions for so many.”

Other points the ACC Center's study made:

- The biggest turnouts occurred April 1975, 72,623; May 1985, 72,285; and May 1981 67,728. The lowest turnout was in May 2000, 38,166
- Turnout percentages were also higher in the past. The highest turnout percentage occurred in 1971 at 56.7%. The lowest occurred in 2000 at 7.4 percent.
- After passage of the “Little Less Corruption Ordinance” in 1997, turnout dropped below May 1997 levels and has never recovered
- The five mayors to receive the most votes have been: Roy Butler, Will Wynn, Carole McClellan (Strayhorn), Jeff Friedman, Frank Cooksey (in rank order)

“As citizens, we expect a lot from our officials. We tell them to lower the crime rate, use public funds wisely, and so on and so on -and rightly so. Yet, many of us do not do our part to help make a city run; we don't vote. How is this a good example for our youth?” remarked ACC's Associate Professor of History, Larry Willoughby, one of the authors and compilers of the recent report.

For a copy of the complete report on *Austin Voter Turnout In Mayoral Elections, 1971-2006* please go to www.austincc.edu/cppps/publications. To learn more about the ACC Center for Public Policy and Political Studies and its vision, please contact its Director W.R. Peck Young at 512-223-7049 or pyoung@austincc.edu.

About CPPPS

The ACC Center for Public Policy & Political Studies (CPPPS), housed under the [Office of Governmental and Community Relations](#), is a nonpartisan and externally funded 501(c) (3), www.austincc.edu/cppps. CPPPS is committed to education, civic engagement and promoting understanding across cultures. The Center's goal is to help ACC students get to know the processes that govern our state and our nation. The Center enables ACC's students to develop a broad range of analytical and decision-making skills that they will use to understand issues of public concern. With these skills, students can pursue civic leadership and professional positions at public, nonprofit and private organizations.

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