



REPORT #1 -

**STUDIES OF POLITICAL STATISTICS:
STRAIGHT TICKET VOTING IN TEXAS,
1998-2006**



SUMMARY OF STRAIGHT TICKET VOTING IN TEXAS 1998-2006 REPORT

The following is the first of many studies, presentations, and reports that will be conducted by the students and faculty of the Austin Community College Center for Public Policy & Political Studies.

Periodically, we will conduct non-partisan studies of political statistics (i.e. election results, voter registration, legislation figures, etc.) to see what these studies reveal about political processes in Texas, and the Austin community specifically.

This report was prepared by Associate Professor of History Larry Willoughby, with the assistance of four ACC students, Brad Burnett, Elise Swaving, Anastasiya Travina, and Josh Whitcomb.

This statistical political study is an analysis of straight ticket voting in the Texas elections of 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006. "Straight ticket" voting occurs when a voter casts a ballot for all candidates within a party line, e.g., all Democratic or all Republican candidates. The ACC Center for Public Policy and Political Studies (the "Center") will use the information to observe voting patterns and political trends in Texas.

Students gathered the data for counties constituting 73% of the total votes for the 2006 General Election. This information was combined with archival data (1998 to 2004) to compile this report.

The data and analysis supports the following conclusions:

- 1) With the level of straight ticket voting strength in the 2006 election, the independent candidates were never viable.
- 2) Since the Republicans won the straight ticket vote in 2006 (as they had for the previous eight years) and since the Republicans were the top two vote-getters among the swing voters, the entire Democratic slate never had a realistic chance for victory.
- 3) Therefore, the evidence indicates that Republicans continue to dominate Texas state-wide political races.
- 4) However, the dramatic Democratic wins in six of the nine major counties in 2006 is an encouraging sign for Democrats. More analysis is needed to ascertain the reason for the dramatic ideological change in these counties.
- 5) A review and analysis of the 2008 straight ticket voting patterns is necessary to see if 2006 results are an aberration or the beginning of a new trend in the landscape of Texas politics.



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FOCUS of STUDY

This statistical political study is an analysis of straight ticket voting in the Texas elections of 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006. "Straight ticket" voting occurs when a voter casts a ballot for all candidates within a party line, e.g., all Democratic or all Republican candidates. The ACC Center for Public Policy and Political Studies (the "Center") will use the information to observe voting patterns and political trends in Texas.

METHODOLOGY

Data for these five elections was compiled from Texas county voting statistics. County officials were contacted until sufficient response represented between 70% and 90% of total ballots cast in the statewide races. The inquiries started with a list of counties from largest to smallest. For the elections from 1998 to 2004, data came from the archives of the Director of the Center.

For the 2006 election, four Austin Community College students (Brad Burnett, Elise Swaving, Anastasiya Travina, and Josh Whitcomb) surveyed county officials and compiled statistics that represented 73% of the total votes cast throughout Texas (the "Survey"). The students asked for the number of total ballots cast in the county, the total straight ticket Republican votes, the total straight ticket Democratic votes, and the total straight ticket Libertarian (or other) votes. The data was obtained verbally over the phone or was taken from a website provided by the county officials.

This Report will focus primarily on the results of the 2006 statewide elections. All data for this Report was compiled from the Survey and the archives of the Director of the Center.

FINDINGS and ANALYSIS

I. Prior to the election of 2006, there was substantial speculation that the presence of two viable Republican gubernatorial candidates (one running as an Independent), and another independent candidate with appeal to progressive Democrats, would cause a notable drop in straight ticket voting. Numerous political observers believed that traditional "party regulars" of both parties, and core voters, would be attracted to the independent candidates. **Data from the Survey indicate that all of this speculation was incorrect. The core vote for both political parties appears to have been barely affected by the two independent campaigns.**

- ❖ **Straight ticket voting represented 45.04% of the total ballots cast (TBC) in 2006.** That is only 2.6 percentage points lower than 1998 (47.6%) and 4.6 percentage points below 2002 (49.6%). This was a drop-off from 2004 when straight ticket votes constituted 55.55% of all ballots cast. However, in 2004 there was a uniquely high total of straight ticket votes cast.
- ❖ **Despite the presence of two candidates on the ballot for governor, the Republicans still won the straight ticket vote as they have since 1998.** In 2006, the GOP received 51.33% of the straight ticket votes cast, while the Democrats received 47.44%. For the Republicans, this was slightly less than they received in 2002 (52%) or 1998 (52.68%).

II. Therefore, if the two major party candidates split 45% of the core vote at the rate they've traditionally achieved (which they did), they would only need to pick up 20% of the remaining swing vote to make it unfeasible for the two independent candidates to win. **In fact, the two major party candidates picked up 24.33% points from the approximately 55% points available. In doing so, they made it statistically impossible for the independent candidates to win.**

- ❖ The two major party candidates left the two independent candidates only 30.55% points to split between them. This was not enough to realistically elect either one of them.
- ❖ The following is the breakdown of the percentage of votes cast by swing voters for each remaining candidate:

a. Strayhorn	18.11% points
b. Perry	15.91% points
c. Friedman	12.44% points
d. Bell	08.42% points

III. Nine counties (Harris, Dallas, Bexar, Travis, El Paso, Tarrant, Collin, Denton, and Fort Bend) represented a majority of the votes cast in Texas in 2004 and 2006. In those counties, there were some significant differences in straight ticket voting behavior between 2004 and 2006.

- ❖ In 2004, the straight ticket vote was 60.97% of the votes cast in these nine counties. In 2006, the straight ticket vote was 47.65% of all ballots cast in these same counties.
- ❖ In 2004, the Republicans won the straight ticket vote in six of the nine counties. In 2006, the Democrats won the straight ticket vote in six of the nine counties. The three counties that changed were Harris, Bexar, and Fort Bend.
- ❖ In 2004, the Republicans won the straight ticket vote in these counties with an overall 54.43%. In 2006, the Democrats won straight ticket voting in these counties with an overall 49.48%.



CONCLUSIONS

- 1) With the level of straight ticket voting strength in the 2006 election, the independent candidates were never viable.
- 2) Since the Republicans won the straight ticket vote in 2006 (as they had for the previous eight years) and since the Republicans were the top two vote-getters among the swing voters, the entire Democratic slate never had a realistic chance for victory.
- 3) Therefore, the evidence indicates that Republicans continue to dominate Texas state-wide political races.
- 4) However, the dramatic Democratic wins in six of the nine major counties in 2006 is an encouraging sign for Democrats. More analysis is needed to ascertain the reason for the dramatic ideological change in these counties.
- 5) A review and analysis of the 2008 straight ticket voting patterns is necessary to see if 2006 results are an aberration or the beginning of a new trend in the landscape of Texas politics.



**CENTER for PUBLIC POLICY
and POLITICAL STUDIES**

Straight Ticket Voting Percentages in Texas since 1998			
YEAR	S.T.% OF TBC	GOP% OF S.T.	DEMO% OF S.T.
1998	47.60%	52.68%	46.61%
2000	49%	51%	49%
2002	49.60%	52%	48%
2004	55.55%	57%	43%
2006	45.04%	51.33%	47.44%
Legend:			
S.T.% of TBC	Percentage of Straight Ticket Votes of Total Ballots Cast		
GOP% of S.T.	Republican Percentage of the Straight Ticket Vote		
DEMO% of S.T.	Democratic Percentage of the Straight Ticket Vote		

Counties that represent the top 73% of the 2006 vote in Texas

County	Total Votes	CI	Total %	TIC	GOP	GOP%	DEMO	DEMO%	LIB	LIB%	TOT ST VTS	04 Demo %
Harris	589,348	13.40%		601,186	137,663	48.04%	145,865	50.90%	3,052	1.06%	286,580	47%
Dallas	406,211	9.23%	22.63%	409,886	108,000	45.18%	129,136	54.02%	1,913	0.80%	239,049	51%
Tarrant	326,337	7.42%	30.05%	329,340	92,948	57.36%	67,404	41.59%	1,697	1.05%	162,049	38%
Bexar	274,081	6.23%	36.28%	277,072	51,869	46.10%	58,737	52.20%	1,917	1.70%	112,523	48%
Travis	226,176	5.14%	41.42%	228,299	31,326	36.63%	52,462	61.34%	1,736	2.03%	85,524	57%
El Paso	90,723	2.06%	43.48%	93,654	10,154	26.98%	27,008	71.77%	467	1.24%	37,629	67%
Collin	138,088	3.14%	46.62%	139,247	46,621	70.78%	18,708	28.40%	541	0.82%	65,870	25%
Denton	108,513	2.47%	49.09%	109,327	36,385	41.33%	14,992	28.89%	518	1.00%	51,895	26%
Ft. Bend	98,427	2.24%	51.33%	100,526	23,556	47.82%	25,260	51.27%	448	0.91%	49,264	44%
Williamson	84,028	1.91%	53.24%	84,419	21,426	66.64%	10,255	31.89%	473	1.47%	32,154	30%
Montgomery	80,822	1.84%	55.07%	81,970	30,263	78.18%	7,988	20.64%	459	1.19%	38,710	18%
Nueces	67,623	1.54%	56.61%	69,013	10,085	41.33%	13,807	56.58%	512	2.10%	24,404	54%
Galveston	65,241	1.48%	58.09%	66,214	10,993	43.30%	14,037	55.29%	358	1.41%	25,388	49%
Brazoria	58,441	1.33%	59.42%	59,276	11,555	55.13%	9,029	43.08%	374	1.78%	20,958	49%
Lubbock	53,564	1.22%	60.64%	54,237	15,610	69.75%	6,503	29.06%	266	1.19%	22,379	24%
McLennan	53,154	1.21%	61.85%	53,791	8,305	59.00%	5,636	40.04%	136	0.97%	14,077	49%
Hidalgo	47,821	1.09%	62.94%	48,975	4,173	28.67%	10,121	69.53%	263	1.81%	14,557	61%
Jefferson	46,775	1.06%	64.00%	47,113	7,319	33.35%	14,539	66.24%	91	0.41%	21,949	68%
Bell	43,299	0.98%	64.98%	43,701	1,827	19.31%	7,450	78.73%	186	1.97%	9,463	?
Smith	43,289	0.98%	65.97%	43,515	15,336	68.70%	6,010	26.92%	976	4.37%	22,322	32%
Cameron	41,051	0.93%	66.90%	41,152	4,932	34.23%	9,214	63.94%	264	1.83%	14,410	60%
Hays	31,244	0.71%	67.61%	31,655	4,786	33.29%	9,379	65.24%	211	1.47%	14,376	47%
Randall	31,118	0.71%	68.32%	31,516	8,843	79.90%	2,077	18.77%	147	1.33%	11,067	13%
Brazos	30,388	0.69%	69.01%	30,709	8,754	61.46%	5,292	37.15%	198	1.39%	14,244	40%
Gregg	22,530	0.51%	70.21%	24,268	7,490	68.14%	3,410	31.02%	92	0.84%	10,992	33%
Angelina	21,939	0.50%	70.71%	22,492	4,088	46.76%	4,533	51.85%	122	1.40%	8,743	48%
Tom Green	21,576	0.49%	71.20%	21,792	6,158	71.52%	2,323	26.98%	129	1.50%	8,610	31%
Midland	25,448	0.58%	71.78%	25,638	9,758	82.06%	2,059	17.31%	75	0.63%	11,892	19%
Guadalupe	24,847	0.56%	72.34%	25,168	6,268	65.68%	3,117	32.66%	158	1.66%	9,543	13%
Comal	28,477	0.65%	72.99%	28,681	8,683	77.19%	2,411	21.43%	155	1.38%	11,249	20%
Total	3,210,967	72.99%		3,223,832	745,174	51.33%	688,762	47.44%	17,934	1.24%	1,451,870	
					23.11%	51.33%	21.36%	47.44%	0.56%	1.24%	45.04%	
Legend:												
Total Votes:	Total Votes cast in the county in the Gubernatorial race											
CI:	Contribution Index, the percentage that the county contributes to the total vote											
Total %:	Cumulative Percentage Total of the county in that row and the counties listed above it											
TBC:	Total Ballots Cast in the county as reported by the County Clerk											
GOP:	Republican Straight Ticket Votes											
GOP%:	Republican Percentage of the Straight Ticket Vote											
DEMO:	Democratic Straight Ticket Votes											
DEMO%:	Democratic Percentage of the Straight Ticket Vote											
LIB:	Libertarian Straight Ticket Votes											
LIB%:	Libertarian Percentage of Straight Ticket Vote											
TOT ST VTS:	Total Straight Ticket Votes											
04 DEMO %:	2004 Democratic Straight Ticket percentage											



Counties that represent 50% of the Texas General Election Vote in 2004 and 2006

06 County	Total Votes	CI	Total %	TBC	GOP	GOP%	DEMO	DEMO%	LIB	LIB%	TOT ST VTS	04 Demo %
Harris	589,348	13.40%		601,186	137,663	48.04%	145,865	50.90%	3,052	1.06%	286,580	47%
Dallas	406,211	9.23%	22.63%	409,886	108,000	45.18%	129,136	54.02%	1,913	0.80%	239,049	51%
Tarrant	326,337	7.42%	30.05%	329,340	92,948	57.36%	67,404	41.59%	1,697	1.05%	162,049	38%
Bexar	274,081	6.23%	36.28%	277,072	51,869	46.10%	58,737	52.20%	1,917	1.70%	112,523	48%
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Collin	138,088	3.14%	46.62%	139,247	46,621	70.78%	18,708	28.40%	541	0.82%	65,870	25%
Denton	108,513	2.47%	49.09%	109,327	36,385	70.11%	14,992	28.89%	518	1.00%	51,895	26%
Ft. Bend	98,427	2.24%	51.33%	100,526	23,556	47.82%	25,260	51.27%	448	0.91%	49,264	44%
Total	2,257,904	51.33%		2,288,537	538,522	49.39%	539,572	49.48%	12,289	1.13%	1,090,383	
				47.65%	23.53%		23.58%		0.54%		75.10%	of S.T.
					49.39%		49.48%		1.13%			Compiled
04 County	Total Votes	CI			GOP	GOP%	DEMO				TOT ST VTS	
Harris	1,067,968	14.41%			368,838	53.24%	323,996	46.76%			692,834	
Dallas	687,709	9.28%			215,161	48.55%	228,034	51.45%			443,195	
Tarrant	560,141	7.56%			222,445	62.28%	134,745	37.72%			357,190	
Bexar	475,314	6.41%			137,314	51.73%	128,109	48.27%			265,423	
Travis	352,113	4.75%			76,553	41.98%	105,784	58.02%			182,337	
El Paso	169,573	2.29%			29,043	32.71%	59,735	67.29%			88,778	
Collin	245,154	3.31%			112,279	75.39%	36,649	24.61%			148,928	
Denton	201,410	2.72%			88,185	73.55%	31,714	26.45%			119,899	
Ft Bend	163,169	2.20%			51,745	55.75%	41,065	44.25%			92,810	
Total	3,922,551	52.93%			1,301,563	54.43%	1,089,831	45.57%			2,391,394	
					33.18%	54.43%	27.78%	45.57%			60.97%	of S.T.
												Compiled
Legend:												
Total Votes:	Total Votes cast in the county in the Gubernatorial/Presidential races											
CI:	Contribution Index, the percentage that the county contributes to the total vote											
Total %:	Cumulative Percentage Total of the county in that row and the counties listed above it											
TBC:	Total ballots cast in the county as reported by the County Clerk											
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