

Cumulative Voting & Minority
Representation
Amarillo ISD School Board



James Allen
Amarillo's first
black on the
AISD school
board

In 2000, the Amarillo voters elected their first Black and Latina school board members, using cumulative voting.

*Quotes from Amarillo
Globe-News, May 2000*

"We're very excited, very pleased, and basking in the historical moment of this. It gave minorities the prospect that we can make a difference; our vote can make a difference and we can be an integral part of the process. -
Alphonso Vaughn, Amarillo NAACP President

"We were hoping one of the minority candidates would be elected. The fact that we got two minorities on the board is awesome. History was

made in Amarillo." -
Nancy Bosquez, a Potter County justice of the peace and a local leader of the League of United Latin American Citizens



Janie Rivas
AISD school
board
Won in 2002

The Center for Voting and Democracy

The Center is dedicated to fair elections where every vote counts and all voters are represented. As a catalyst for reform, we conduct research, analysis, education and advocacy to build understanding of and support for more democratic voting systems. We promote full representation as an alternative to winner-take-all elections and instant runoff voting as an alternative to plurality elections and traditional runoff elections.

We Provide the Following:

- Voter education & community workshops
- Comprehensive website & library
- Legal assistance in voting rights cases
- Assistance in drafting legislation
- Analysis of alternative voting plans
- Amicus Curiae briefs

A History of Effective Service

The Center for Voting and Democracy (CVD) has a history of successful service to racial and ethnic minorities seeking fair representation. We worked closely with minority communities in Amarillo (TX) in preparation for cumulative voting elections in 2000 and 2002. We helped AAL-DEF defend choice voting in New York City before the Department of Justice in 1999 and made numerous presentations to community groups, charter commissions and national organizations.



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Cumulative Voting at Work in Texas



Prepared by
The Center for Voting
and Democracy



What is Cumulative Voting? How Does It Work?

Although still novel to many Americans, cumulative voting is not new to American politics. From 1870 to 1980, Illinois elected members of its general assembly by cumulative voting. Each legislative district had three representatives, and voters could divide their three votes among candidates however they wished — including “plumping” all three votes on one candidate, which tripled that candidate’s chance to win. The result was fair representation of racial minorities and a fair balance between the major parties in nearly every legislative district.

In Illinois, voters could vote for one, two or three candidates. Their three votes would then be divided equally among those candidates, meaning either three votes for one candidate, one and a half votes for two or one vote for three. In the form of cumulative voting used in Texas each voter can allocate whole votes as they wish, such as giving one vote to one candidate and two votes to another. A grouping of voters that makes up more than a quarter of voters can control representation of one of three seats. The more seats to be elected, the lower the share of votes necessary to earn representation.

More than 50 jurisdictions in Texas have adopted cumulative voting since 1991. In 2002, Amarillo elected its school board by cumulative voting for the second time. Under winner-take-all, no black or Latino has been elected to the school board in two decades. Under cumulative voting, the seven-member board has two Latinas and an African-American who won with strong support in their communities — a much fairer reflection of a city where more than 20 percent of citizens are non-white. Instituted to settle a voting rights lawsuit brought by the NAACP, MALDEF and the League of United Latin American Citizens, cumulative voting has worked very well. Voter turnout also has surged; and all parties in the settlement express satisfaction with the system.

