

## Allowing junior college district trustees to be elected by plurality vote

HB 961 by J. Rodriguez (Seliger)

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**DIGEST:** HB 961 would have eliminated the requirement for a junior college governing board runoff election under certain circumstances by allowing the board of trustees to adopt a resolution allowing a candidate who received a plurality of the votes cast at the initial election to prevail. A junior college board that chose this option would have been required to adopt the resolution at least 180 days before the election, and the resolution would have remained in effect for subsequent elections until rescinded by another resolution adopted at least 180 days before the first election to which the rescission applied.

The bill would not have applied to a special election for a vacant trustee position, nor to the appointment of additional trustees for Blinn Junior College District.

**GOVERNOR'S REASON FOR VETO:** “It is essential that local voters have full opportunity to determine the junior college district board members who make property tax decisions for these districts. House Bill 961 would have authorized elections for junior college district board seats to be decided by plurality vote without a runoff election. In crowded races, this would result in the election of candidates who received a small percentage of voter support. Those very same crowded races are often the ones where voter interest is highest and dissatisfaction with the incumbent is most acute. Runoff elections ensure that every seat on the board is occupied by someone who received a majority of votes in an election. These elections have important consequences for property owners and for junior colleges. They should not be treated like second-tier elections.”

**RESPONSE:** **Rep. Justin Rodriguez**, the bill’s author, said: “It is disappointing to have HB 961 vetoed by the governor after we worked so closely with numerous stakeholders, including the Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC), on the language of the bill. The bill, in its final form, was intended to provide community college districts with an alternative to costly, low-turnout trustee runoff elections. HB 961 would not have forced community college districts into a plurality vote system, but rather would have simply allowed them to pass a resolution to opt in should they choose to do so — similar to the option provided to boards of trustees at local school districts.”

**Sen. Kel Seliger**, the Senate sponsor, had no comment on the veto.

**NOTES:** [HB 961](#) was digested in Part Two of the May 5 *Daily Floor Report*.