



DECLARATION:

The Austin Area Research Organization (AARO) urges Central Texas voters to vote yes on the **Austin Community College District's Bond Propositions 1 & 2, and Proposition 3, the Maintenance and Operations tax cap question** in this November's Election.

As an organization dedicated to advancing the long-term economic and social well-being of Central Texas, AARO is strongly committed to a system of public and higher education which is accessible to all Central Texans and meets the region's growing and changing workforce demands. We understand that our region's long-term success is directly connected to the quality of its education system, which directly benefits our residents and produces the workforce necessary to ensure economic prosperity.

Austin Community College District (ACC) is a critical piece of Central Texas' education system. ACC fulfills this region's educational and workforce development needs in a variety of critical and innovative ways, such as:

- Workforce training,
- Early college/high school dual credit,
- Associate degrees,
- Career/technical certificates,
- Core curriculum/university transfer, and
- Continuing education.

As business and civic leaders, AARO members have a vested interest in ensuring the region's educational system continues to produce a high quality pool of talent to drive future business success and economic prosperity throughout the state. Access to high quality education at all levels is critical to the welfare of our region, and we are pleased that ACC provides many levels of these educational opportunities for Central Texans.

In addition, AARO members recognize that there is a cost to ensuring quality throughout our region's educational system. The long-term economic welfare of Central Texas requires that we find the resources to make such quality accessible. **To that end, AARO supports ACC's Bond Propositions 1 & 2, and Proposition 3, the Maintenance and Operations tax cap, on the November 2014 ballot.**

Bond Propositions 1 & 2

ACC has wisely spent money from the 2003 bond election to complete a number of projects that serve Central Texas students, including campus construction, expansions, parking facilities, and purchases of land for future expansions. In addition, ACC has used student fees to invest in other college infrastructure, such as the new campus at Highland which includes the ACCelerator Learning Lab.

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Now the public needs to invest its share in the infrastructure needed to meet our region's education and workforce training needs.

Proposition 1 will allow ACC to finish out the Highland campus, construct a new campus in Leander, and purchase land for a regional workforce center in southeast Travis County. Proposition 2 will allow ACC to renovate the almost 100-year-old Rio Grande campus, construct a first-responders training center at the Hays campus, construct a workforce training center at the Elgin campus, renovate campuses districtwide for health, environmental sustainability, safety, and technology, and expand the Round Rock campus.

We encourage Central Texans to join AARO members in voting for ACC Bond Propositions 1 and 2.

Proposition 3: Maintenance and Operations Tax Cap

While ACC is the most affordable college option in Central Texas, ACC tuition rates are among the highest of the community college tuition rates in the state, making it difficult for many Central Texans to obtain the education and training they need. As affordability and college debt continues to be an issue of concern, it is imperative that ACC have the resources to stabilize tuition rates and maintain affordability for our students.

In addition to stabilizing tuition, the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) tax cap increase will allow ACC to expand innovative regional workforce initiatives at Highland, maintain tuition waivers for Early College Start (dual credit), and attract and retain quality faculty and staff.

The Career Expressway workforce initiative is an AARO "Big Bet" that would be fully developed at Highland. The Career Expressway is a fast-track path for motivated, underemployed low-income adults, who have some college but no degree or certification, to complete the education and training they need to be placed in targeted, in-demand, high-paying jobs. It will help our region grow its workforce and its middle-class.

We believe the \$0.03 M&O tax cap increase over six years is a reasonable request to the taxpayers and will be well-used by ACC to meet Central Texas education and workforce needs going forward.

We encourage Central Texans to join us in voting for ACC ballot Proposition 3, the M&O tax cap question.

Joe Holt, President
Austin Area Research Organization (AARO)

Susan Dawson, Chair
AARO P-16 Education Committee

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