

**TO:** The 2011 Charter Revision Committee

**FROM:** Austin Center for Peace & Justice

**PRESENTER:** Jacklyn Williams

**DATE:** January 5, 2012

**SUBJECT:** Modification to the 8-4-1 Model

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Charter Revision Committee-Austin Center for Peace and Justice

Greetings to the Chairperson, and committee members

Congratulations on making it through the New Year and our compliments to you and your committee for the fine work and patience you have exhibited in dealing with this matter.

Rudy Williams, Chair of ACPJ and Roscoe Overton and I as the designers of this plan would like to present our plan that has modifications to it since it was last presented.

Let me explain why this is significant for you at this point. Rudy was a long term resident of the City of Houston, Tx, Roscoe was a long term resident of the City of Memphis and I was a long term resident of the City of Chicago. The emphasis here is that each of these cities had an interesting model that suited the lifestyles of those communities. (Yes we played heavy ward politics in Chicago, but it worked for the constituents there.) In our discussion as to why we are still unsettled in Austin about our method of electing our City Council we started comparing how things worked in our respective cities. We found that there was a common interest in all three

however, based upon the close similarity of populations, the Memphis model was closest in size to Austin.

Therefore, we considered that model as a base design in which we recommended at the initial meeting of this committee. This was the 8-4-1 model.

It involved:

Two super districts divided by population

8 single members elected one per district

4 members elected in the super districts (two in each)

1 member elected at –large (by the total city) as Mayor

13 Total elected members

The committee's recommendation was predicated on the 1970 census for the April 1, 1978 election when a proposal was submitted to the electorate for an 8 single member district model. The population of the African Americans represented a size that was considered large enough to elect a person of their choosing as an equal opportunity district. However, almost 33 years later the 2010 census reflects a reduction in the African American communities' population which would require now 10

single member districts in order to meet the opportunity district definition. As an African American I certainly understand the impact of this.

Now comes the opportunity for Austin's creativity to join other major cities in the way in which we elect City Council members and increasing the interest of the population in the process. As you know the turn out for elections has been extremely low in the past. The issue that we are recommending to the committee is Where Do We Go From Here? Because we don't want to be shortsighted in our vision as the planners were in the development and the construction of IH 35 through the city of Austin.

You have heard from representatives with the other models the 6-2-1; the 10-1; and our 8-4-1. We are recommending consideration of a portion of each of these models to be known as the 10-4-1 Model.

It involves:

Two Super Districts divided by population

10 single members elected – one per district

4 members elected in the Super Districts (2 in each)

1 member elected at-large (total city) as Mayor

15 total elected members

This model represents a way for the three plans to come together for the benefit of Austin's electorate.

I will be happy to entertain any questions you may have.

JACKLYN C. WILLIAMS, MEMBER

AUSTIN CENTER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

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