

# **Community Colleges Stunned by Governor Perry's Attack on College Faculty Group Health Insurance**

*Deals a blow to access and opportunity for future generations of Texans*

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Steven Johnson  
(512) 476-2572  
(512) 468-5245  
sjohnson@tacc.org

(Austin, TX- 6/15/2007) Today, Governor Rick Perry issued a veto proclamation that cuts \$155,586,981 from the state's 50 Public Community Colleges. The largest portion of this cut, nearly \$154 million, is applied to the group health insurance for Community College faculty and administrators. In his proclamation the Governor accuses the state's Community Colleges of fraud by falsifying appropriations requests.

The Governor's veto of \$154 million for the FY 09 Group Health Insurance Appropriations for Public Community Colleges is an ill-advised decision based on faulty reasoning. Accusing Community Colleges of falsifying appropriations requests is an irresponsible statement to which we take strong exception. The Governor's veto statement refers to a policy issue known as proportionality. The Legislature held interim hearings on this issue and discussed the issue openly in its deliberations on HB 1. The Legislature made its appropriations decisions with full understanding of the key differences between Community Colleges and other state agencies with regard to the issue of proportionality.

The notion that Community Colleges can absorb a cut of more than \$150 million is folly on the part of the Governor. Community Colleges have yet to recover from the drastic cuts from 2002-03. The proposed appropriations in HB 1 barely return community college funding to FY 1997 levels. At a time when the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has called on Community Colleges to bear the greatest burden in helping the state meet its higher education goals, the Governor has dealt a blow to access and opportunity for future generations of Texans.

"We are stunned that the Governor would remove half of the state support for the health insurance for our faculty and administrators," said Dr. John Pickelman, Chair of the Board of Director of the Texas Association of Community Colleges. "With this veto of essential funding, the Governor has fractured the historic relationship between local communities and the state," said Dr. Pickelman.

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