Trustees to Consider Board Zoning Resolution
*Measure Would Establish College Trustee Districts in Bentonville, Rogers*

**BENTONVILLE, Ark. (July 11, 2012)** – NorthWest Arkansas Community College Board of Trustees will consider a resolution approving a map showing nine board of trustee zones in compliance with state statute §6-61-529 during a specially called meeting at 8:15 a.m. Saturday, July 14. The meeting will be in Peterson Auditorium of the Shewmaker Center for Global Business Development in Bentonville, and the session will be in conjunction with the Board’s July retreat.

State statute §6-61-529 states that electors of a community college district having a 10 percent or greater population in any one racial minority, as reported by the most recent federal decennial census information, shall elect the members of the local board utilizing zones instead of at-large.

The college’s taxing district – the Bentonville and Rogers public school districts – exceeded the 10 percent racial minority threshold in the 2010 Census.

The law states that these nine zones will be approved by the county Election Commission at least 90 days prior to the general election, or by Aug. 6.

The law also states that zones shall have substantially equal population, with boundaries based on the most recent available federal decennial census information. NWACC asked the Benton County Clerk’s Office and the county GIS Department to map the zones. The County GIS Department produced nine zones with a population variation of no more than 2.53 percent. Each of the nine zones has approximately 17,300 residents.

The law also provides the college district an exemption from dividing the board into zones if no one zone contains more than 20 percent of any one minority population. Of the nine zones trustees will be asked to approve, three exceed the 20 percent, varying from 28 percent to 34 percent Hispanic or Latino population.
The map that the Board will consider places five trustees in the Rogers School District and four in the Bentonville School District. This 5-4 trustee apportionment is based on Census 2010 total population, as described in state statute §6-61-530. Previously, the board included six at-large representatives from the Rogers district and three at-large representatives from the Bentonville district.

The nine zones also follow as closely as possible the current public school board zones in the two public school districts. Five of the nine zones fall completely within a public school board zone.

Three trustees’ terms expire this December, those of Board Chairman Alex Vasquez, and former chairmen Joan Clifford and Mark Lundy. The three have said they will not seek another six-year term. Of the six remaining, no two trustees live in the same proposed zone. Trustee Randy Lawson would be in District 1, Trustee Johnny Haney in District 2, Trustee Mike Shupe in District 3, Trustee Hadley Hindmarsh in District 5, Trustee Ric Clifford in District 6 and Trustee Joe Spivey would be in District 9.

There are three other two-year colleges in Arkansas with elected boards of trustees to which §6-61-529 applies. However, none of those institutions’ decennial census reports have ever triggered implementation of this law. With no precedent to follow, NWACC sought clarification on §6-61-529 from the Attorney General’s office, which on May 25 issued a 10-page opinion requested by state Rep. Mary Lou Slinkard.

Based on that opinion, current members of the NWACC board will not continue to serve for the remainder of their respective six-year terms. They will initially be up for election at the Nov. 6 general election. Previously, NWACC board elections were held in September alongside public school elections.

According to the Attorney General’s opinion, trustees will be elected exclusively by voters within their respective zone. Previously, trustees were elected at large from the school district they represented.

New term lengths will be determined at the trustees’ annual meeting in January 2013.

NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a smart choice for students wanting to pursue quality higher education. As an accredited institution through the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, NWACC is a public two-year institution that serves and strengthens its surrounding communities in Benton and Washington counties by helping our students maximize their potential and exceed expectations. With state-of-the-art facilities, NWACC provides excellent academic instruction and workforce training needed to succeed, offering personalized attention from highly respected faculty, staff, and administrators. For more information, visit www.nwacc.edu.