To: The Task Force on Consolidated Government Governance Subcommittee
From: Georgette E. Dumont, MPA, PhD
RE: Voter Turnout Data
Date: February 3, 2014

At our meeting on January 30, 2014, I presented the subcommittee data on voter turn out during different election cycles. As noted that morning, my area of specialty is not voting behavior, and I gave you the wrong number with regard to the percentage point increase from the presidential and midterm elections versus off-cycles elections. The number I gave you was the turnout for adult residents, not registered voters (Hanjal and Lewis, 2003). The correct data are that vote turnout for Presidential elections was found to be 36.4 percentage points higher when compared to off-cycle elections; midterm congressional elections was found to be 25.1 percentage points higher than off-cycle elections. If we include the presidential primaries, Hanjal and Lewis (2003) found a 25.1 percentage point increase in the turn out of registered votes compared to off-cycle elections.

With regard to Mr. Hill's question regarding voter turnout over time, the correct answer is that it all depends on how one analyzes the data. I was correct when I noted that over time, voter turnout has decline, if one includes the total adult population. However, if one controls for only the adult population eligible to register to vote, the number of individuals voting over time has remained consistent. Dr. Michael Binder sent me the following regarding voter turnout overtime:

There are *"three different measures of "turnout".   Turnout is calculated based on the numerator (number of votes cast or number ballots cast) and a denominator, some total of potential voters. There are several different measures for the denominator.*

VAP – Voting Age Population: includes all adults over 18. Benefit is it can be a measure of 'democracy' if you believe every adult ought to have a voice in the process.
VEP – Voting Eligible Population: includes on adults that are eligible to vote. Benefit is that it only includes people eligible to vote (leaves out felons and non-citizens, etc.). This is a more accurate measure of turnout by eligibility, but that denominator is difficult to calculate.
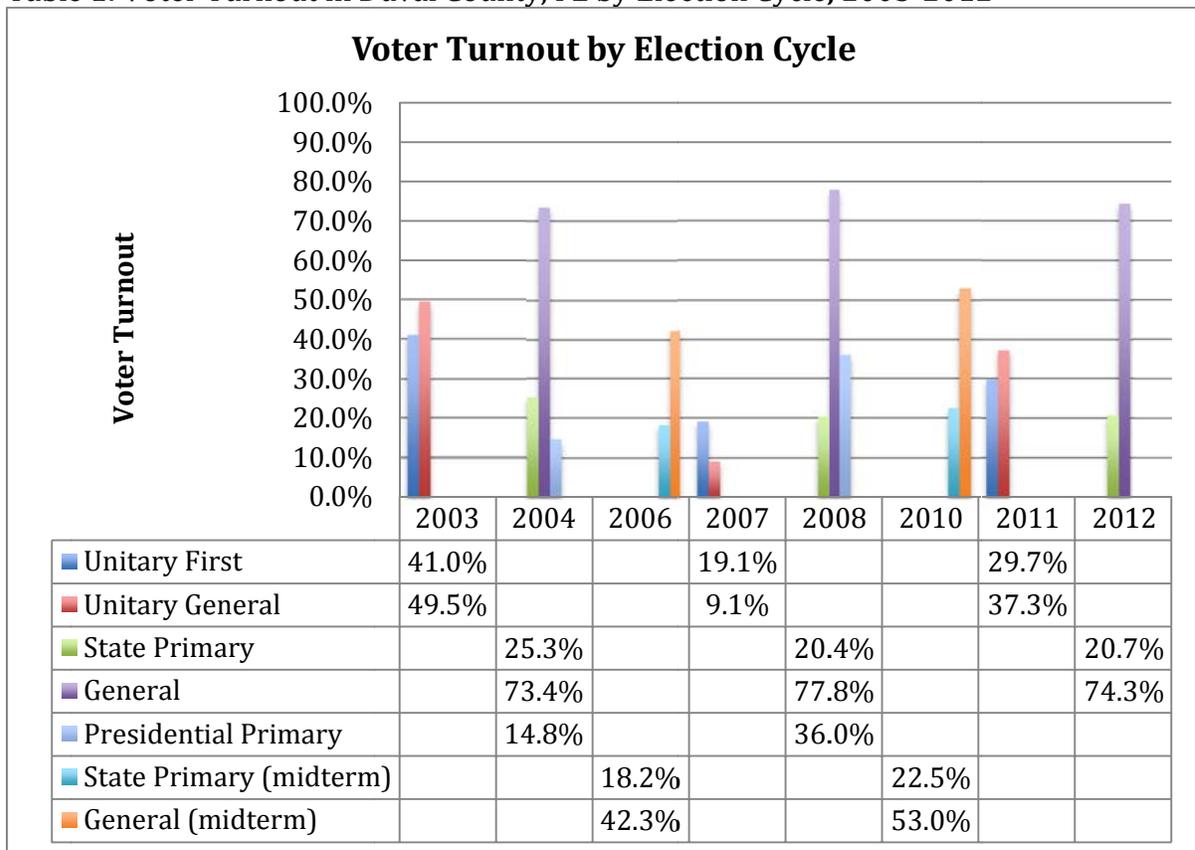*Registered Turnout: This is what the Supervisor of Elections reports. It only includes people who are actually registered to vote. It is easy to calculate since the population of registered voters is known, however, it does not take into account the people who could vote but have failed to register.*

As a rule the VAP denominator is the largest, therefore the VAP turnout is the lowest. VEP is usually close to VAP, but areas with heavy non-citizen populations can have differences of more than a few percentage points. Registered Voter Turnout usually very high, sometimes as high as 80% in presidential elections.

When thinking about turnout, it really doesn't matter a whole lot, which measure you use if you are only making comparisons between elections. BUT, you must be consistent with the measure you choose to use" (Binder 2014).

       I have included a visual representation of the data Jeff Clements compiled on January 31, 2014 (Table 1; Jeff's data is included in Appendix A). I believe this is a representation of the percentage of registered voters who turned out to vote. As you can see, and as expected, the general elections have the highest turnout. While some off-cycle unitary elections had high turnout, it is believed the turnout is a more of a function of the candidates on the ballot and the contention of the race. There is no reason to believe that they would not have turned out if aligned with either state or national elections.

Table 1: Voter Turnout in Duval County, FL by Election Cycle, 2003-2012

Voter Turnout by Election Cycle

	2003	2004	2006	2007	2008	2010	2011	2012
■ Unitary First	41.0%			19.1%			29.7%	
■ Unitary General	49.5%			9.1%			37.3%	
■ State Primary		25.3%			20.4%			20.7%
■ General		73.4%			77.8%			74.3%
■ Presidential Primary		14.8%			36.0%			
■ State Primary (midterm)			18.2%			22.5%		
■ General (midterm)			42.3%			53.0%		

<u>Month of each election</u>
Unitary First: April
Unitary General: May
State Primary: August
Presidential primary: March and January, consecutively
State Primary: August
General and General (midterm): November

Works cited

Binder. M. (2014). Personal email correspondence regarding voter turnout, January 31.

Hanjal, Z. and P. Lewis. (2003). Municipal Institutions and Voter Turnout in Local Elections. *Urban Affairs Review*, 38(5), pp 645-668.

Appendix A: Duval County Voter Turnout Statistics, compiled by Jeff Clements

2003 City unitary first election (4/15/03): **41%**
(Mayor – Carlucci/Glover/Payton/Weinstein/Soud; City Council, constitutional officers)

2003 City unitary general election (5/13/03): **49.5%**
(Mayor – Peyton/Glover; Property Appraiser, City Council)

2004 Democratic Presidential preference primary (3/9/04): **14.83%**
(John Kerry/Howard Dean/John Edwards/ Dick Gephardt/Joe Lieberman)

2004 state primary (8/31/04): **25.3%**
(U.S. Senate and House, special School Board race)

2004 general election (11/2/04): **73.4%**
(President – Bush/Kerry; U.S. Senate and House, state Senate, judicial races, Jax Beach, Neptune Beach, constitutional amendments)

2006 state primary (9/5/06): **18.21%**
(U.S. Senate, governor, state cabinet, state legislature, judges, Jax Beach, constitutional amendments)

2006 general election (11/7/06): **42.31%**
(U.S. Senate and House, Governor (Crist/Davis); state cabinet, judges)

2007 City unitary first election (3/20/07): **19.1%**
(Mayor – Peyton/Jackie Brown; city council, constitutional officers)

2007 City unitary general election (5/17/07): **9.1%**
(6 City Council runoff elections)

2008 Presidential primary election (1/29/08): **35.99%**
(Democratic: Obama/Biden/Clinton/Edwards, Republican: McCain/Romney/Huckabee/Giuliani; constitutional amendment, Town of Baldwin)

2008 state primary (8/28/08): **20.38%**
(State legislature, 2 City Council races, judges, 1 School Board)

2008 general election (11/4/08): **77.8%**
(President – Obama/McCain, Congress, state legislature, School board, judges)

2010 state primary (8/24/10): **22.47%**
(U.S. Senate and House, governor and FL cabinet, School Board, Jax Beach)

2010 general election (11/2/10): **52.99%**
(U.S. Senate – Rubio/Meek, U.S. House, governor – Scott/Sink, FL cabinet, FL House, judges, Neptune Beach, constitutional amendments

2011 City unitary first election (4/12/11): **29.7%**
(Mayor – Brown/Hogan/Moran/Mullaney, City Council, constitutional officers)

2011 City unitary general election (5/27/11): **37.3%**
(Mayor – Brown/Hogan; City Council)

2012 Presidential primary (2/13/12): **45.01%**
(Republican – Romney/Gingrich/Paul)

2012 state primary (8/14/12): **20.7%**
(U.S. Senate, Congress, state Senate, judges, School Board)

2012 general election (11/6/12): **74.3%**
(President – Obama/Romney, U.S. Senate, Congress, state Senate, judges, School Board, Constitutional amendments, Jax Beach mayor and council, Baldwin mayor and council)