

Audit Results for the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary

Voter History Audit

Audit Description: When voters check in at polling places, they fill out authorization to vote (ATV) forms or one-stop applications during early voting. This results in a voter history record for each individual. When ballots are run through tabulators, tabulation software provides election return data that identifies the number of ballots cast. This audit compares the number of ATV forms and one-stop applications with the number of physical ballots cast. These two numbers should generally match, but may be *slightly* off for valid reasons, such as if a voter checks in and then decides not to vote.

This audit is designed to identify certain problems or fraud, such as ballot stuffing, fraudulent manual entries, tampering with media cards or certain ballot coding issues.

Findings: Currently, the absolute value of all variances statewide is 472, which, on average, is less than five ballots per county, or about 1/50th of 1% of all ballots cast. These variances are likely to decrease as county election officials continue to process voter history records. The average among counties that have “finalized voter history” is 3.87 ballots per county.

Manual Entry Audit

Audit Description: County election officials occasionally must enter election results by hand directly into the vote tabulation software. This may occur, for example, due to a media card failure. This audit can catch inadvertent mistakes in transcribing numbers, as well as purposeful manipulation of data.

North Carolina updated its Election Reporting system to include an automated process able to detect transcription errors in real time as results are entered by hand. Several data validation rules are run against manual entries which effectively eliminate transcription errors, within an error rate of a fraction of one percent.

Findings: All manual Entries entered into our Election Reporting system have been tested for transcription errors.

Sample Audit

Audit Description: A post-election sample audit that checks the accuracy of the equipment is required by statute. State officials select a statistically significant number of precincts or absentee/early voting groupings (usually 2) for county officials who conduct a hand-eye-count of all ballots in those precincts or voting methods. These results are compared to the tabulated results and any variances are noted. Permitted variances include the following

situations: (1) The write-in oval was not filled in but a name was written in the write-in line, or (2) the machine did not count a choice that was represented by checkmarks, x's, or that was poorly shaded.

Findings: A variance of 38 votes were found, statewide, based on light or improper marks, or based on human error in conducting the hand-eye count. All variances were no more than 1 vote for any individual candidate, with the exception of Chatham which showed a difference of 2 and Watauga which showed a difference of 2, 4, and 7 due to human error within the hand-eye count that, according to the County Director, occurred “over the course of 6 hours and 2000+ ballots, ... [and] was attributable to weary eyes and simple mistakes”. These variances did not affect election outcomes.

Provisional Audit

Audit Description: Voters cast provisional ballots when questions arise about their qualifications or eligibility to vote in certain contests. Those ballots are held aside pending research by county boards of elections as to whether they should be counted. This audit of provisional voter data analyzes data from several data sources, including the DMV database, an incomplete queue that catalogs registration attempts that were deemed incomplete and the current registration database as of Election Day. Data analysts execute matching algorithms to determine whether provisional voters were eligible vote in the counties where they presented to vote. Additionally, geocoding services are used to geocode the voters' addresses to confirm that they resided in the county at the time they voted. Audit results are sent to county boards of elections, which analyze them and, where appropriate, amend their decisions to reflect any changes.

Findings: This audit resulted in 44 voters statewide whose provisional ballots were counted in accordance with current election law. Those ballots would likely not have been counted otherwise. There is a remaining variance of 92 provisional ballots statewide that the county deemed a 'false positive'. This results in a difference, on average, of less than one provisional ballot per county.

Deeper Audits for Close Contests

The last audit that is executed compares the margin of victory in any particular contest to the sum of the aforementioned variances. If the margin of victory is less than this summation, then further audits and analysis are undertaken.

Findings: This “Close Contest Audit” revealed no issues that could jeopardize election outcomes under the jurisdiction of the state board, except for the following independent contests where the margin of victory is small:

Contest	Margin of Victory
PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE (CST)	15 & 55
PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE (GRE)	112

We currently cannot readily determine ballots cast counts by party from the data that is replicated to the state database. Therefore, it is difficult to separate out the voter history audit variances by party, although intuition would tell us that most of the variances would be attributable to the two major parties.