Audit Results for the July 26, 2022 Elections

August 16, 2022

Voter History Audit

Audit Description: When voters check in at polling places, they fill out authorization to vote (ATV) forms on Election Day or one-stop applications during early voting. This results in a voter history record for each voter. When ballots are run through tabulators, tabulation software provides election return data that identifies the number of ballots cast. The Voter History Audit compares the number of ATV forms and applications with the number of physical ballots cast. These two numbers should generally match but may be slightly off for various reasons (e.g., poll worker error or a voter checks in 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: All 15 counties have fully processed their voter histories. Of these 15 counties, four had minor differences between ballots cast and voter history. The absolute combined value of all variances for counties is nine ballots or, on average, about 0.6 ballots per county. The overall average county vote differential to ballots cast is 0.0049%. The counties have provided explanations to account for these differences.

In other words, this audit identified no evidence that vote totals or ballots cast were manipulated in any way. Except for the small differences noted above, the physical ballots cast matched the number of voters who checked in at Election Day polling places or early voting sites or returned an absentee ballot.

Sample Audit

Audit Description: A post-election sample audit that checks the accuracy of the voting equipment across the state is required by statute. State officials select a statistically significant number of precincts or absentee/early voting groupings (usually two) 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) Human error in processing a ballot, (2) The write-in oval was not filled in, but a name was written in the write-in line, or (3) the machine did not count a choice that was represented by a checkmark or “x”, or that was circled or poorly shaded. A total of 26 samples were chosen statewide, two for each county with votes cast in the July 26 election. Of these, 23 were Election Day precincts, one was an early voting site, and two counties conducted a hand-eye audit of all mail-in absentee ballots.

Findings: Of the 26 samples audited, only one difference between machine counts and human hand-eye counts was found. The difference was attributed to a human error. Aside from the difference noted above, in all other counties, the machine count and hand-eye count matched exactly in the sampled precincts. In other words, in 25 of 26 samples, the hand and machine counts were the same.

**Deeper Audits for Close Contests**

**Audit Description:** The final audit compares the margin of victory in any contest to the sum of the possible variances. If the margin of victory is less than this summation, then further audits are run to check issues related to the variances, and any applicable provisional ballots. 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. When further auditing of provisional data is necessary, analysts process 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 to vote in the counties where they presented to vote. Additionally, if needed, audit results are sent to county boards of elections, which analyze them and, where appropriate, amend their canvasses to reflect any changes.

**Findings:** This “Close Contest Audit” revealed no issues that could jeopardize election outcomes under the jurisdiction of the State Board. However, the City of Fayetteville City Council District 03 contest in Cumberland County was very close (difference of six votes) and with a variance of two ballots cast more than the voter history count (at county level). A full recount was conducted by the county, which resulted in no change to the election outcome.