



NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Post-Election Audit Report for the 2025 Municipal Elections

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Overview

The North Carolina State Board of Elections (NCSBE) is the state agency that oversees all primary and general elections in North Carolina. NCSBE works closely with the 100 county boards of elections to ensure accessible, safe, secure, and accurate elections for more than 7.6 million registered voters.

To help meet these objectives, after every election, the county boards of elections and NCSBE conduct a series of audits designed to ensure vote counts are accurate and that voters can be confident in the results.

Municipal partisan primaries were held on September 9, 2025, in four municipalities across 3 of North Carolina's 100 counties. More than 42,000 voters cast ballots, or a turnout of about 8% of the approximately 537,000 voters eligible to vote in these contests.

Municipal nonpartisan primaries and elections were held on October 7, 2025, in 14 municipalities across 18 of North Carolina's 100 counties. More than 78,000 voters cast ballots, or a turnout of about 12% of the approximately 654,000 voters eligible to vote in these contests.

Municipal elections were held on November 4, 2025, in 447 municipalities across 88 of North Carolina's 100 counties. More than 700,000 voters cast ballots, or a turnout of about 19.7% of the approximately 3.5 million voters eligible to vote in these contests.

With post-election audits now complete, NCSBE staff presents the information below to the State Board members, who will vote on whether to authenticate the count of these primaries and elections at a meeting on November 25, 2025. These primaries and elections were all canvassed by the county boards of elections because they are within the county boards' jurisdiction under

N.C.G.S. § 163-182.4. Each section includes a description of the audit and a summary of the audit's findings.

Voter History Audit

Audit Description: When voters check in at polling places, they fill out authorization to vote (ATV) forms on Election Day or early voting applications during early voting, which are treated the same as an ATV. Voters who cast absentee-by-mail ballots complete an application as part of the ballot return envelope. These documents are used to assign voter history for each voter (i.e., record that a voter participated in an election). 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, early voting applications, and absentee-by-mail applications with the number of physical ballots cast. These two numbers should match. However, they can be slightly off for various reasons. For example, small voter history discrepancies may result from election worker error in assigning voter history to a voter, or from a voter checking in, then deciding not to vote.

This audit is designed to identify significant discrepancies, which could be a sign of election fraud, such as ballot stuffing, fraudulent manual entries, or tampering with media cards. It can also identify certain ballot coding errors. Although not required by law, this audit is conducted as a best practice in election administration and to give voters confidence in election results.

Findings: All 3 counties that conducted September municipal elections have completed the voter history process, assigning voter history to voters who cast ballots and reconciling that number with physical ballots cast. Of these 3 counties, 2 counties' voter histories and ballots cast matched exactly, while 1 county had a difference of 11 ballots.

All 18 counties that conducted October municipal elections have completed the voter history process, assigning voter history to voters who cast ballots and reconciling that number with physical ballots cast. Of these 18 counties, 16 counties' voter histories and ballots cast matched exactly, while 2 counties had minor differences; both of which were off by a single ballot. The absolute combined value of all variances for counties is 2 ballots or, on average, fewer than one (1) ballot per county.

All 88 counties that conducted November municipal elections have completed the voter history process, assigning voter history to voters who cast ballots and reconciling that number with physical ballots cast. Of these 88 counties, 68 counties' voter histories and ballots cast matched exactly, while 20 counties had minor differences. The majority of those counties were off by a single ballot and only one county was off by more than three ballots. The absolute combined value of all variances for counties is 43 ballots or, on average, fewer than one (1) ballot per county.

This audit identified no evidence that vote totals or ballots cast were manipulated. Except for the small, explainable 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. [N.C.G.S. § 163-182.1\(b\)\(1\)](#). On the day following each election, state elections officials randomly select a statistically significant number of precincts or absentee/early voting groupings, typically two, for each county board of elections. Bipartisan teams at each county board of elections – in open, public meetings – conduct hand-eye counts of one contest on all ballots in those precincts or groupings. In presidential election years, this is always the presidential contest in the primary and general election. In municipal primaries and elections, these contests are often the top contest on the ballot, such as a mayoral contest.

These hand-count results are compared to the machine counts, and any variances are noted. The county board of elections sends the machine counts and hand counts to the state, along with explanations for any discrepancies.

Minor variances most often result from the following situations: (1) human error in the hand-eye audit count itself; (2) the voter did not fill in the write-in oval or square, but wrote a name in the write-in line; or (3) the machine did not count a choice that the voter made by a checkmark or “x,” or a choice that was circled or poorly shaded on the ballot.

Findings: A total of 6 ballot groupings were chosen randomly statewide, for counties with September 9 elections. Of the 6 samples, all 6 were Election Day precincts. In all six samples audited, no discrepancies were found between machine counts and human hand-eye counts.

A total of 29 ballot groupings were chosen randomly statewide, including two samples for most counties, with October 7 elections. One sample was chosen for Burke County as they only had one Election Day precinct participating in the election. Of the 29 samples, 22 were Election Day precincts, 5 were early voting sites, and 2 counties conducted a hand-eye audit of all absentee-by-mail ballots. In all 29 samples audited, no discrepancies were found between machine counts and human hand-eye counts.

A total of 169 ballot groupings were chosen randomly statewide, including two samples for most counties, with November 4 elections. One sample was chosen for five counties who had only had Election Day voting in a single precinct: Alleghany, Gates, Pamlico, Tyrrell, and Yancey. Lincoln County did not have enough ballots cast to be included in the audit. Of the 169 samples, 137 were Election Day precincts, 27 were early voting sites, and 5 counties conducted a hand-eye audit of all absentee-by-mail ballots.

Of the 169 samples audited, 12 had differences between machine counts and human hand-eye counts ranging from zero to four votes. Most differences were attributed to human error in marking ballots such as using check marks instead of filling in the bubble or voters not filling in the bubble when writing-in a candidate. Aside from the differences noted above, in all other counties, the machine count and hand-eye count matched exactly in the sampled precincts. In other words, in 157 of 169 samples, the hand and machine counts were the same.

The results of this sample audit show once again that the certified and tested machines used to count ballots do so with great accuracy.

Voter Eligibility Audit

Audit Description: Starting with the November 2024 general election, the State Board began conducting a voter eligibility audit during the canvass period following an election. Although not required by law, this audit provides the county boards of elections comprehensive data on potentially ineligible early and absentee voters for the county boards to challenge those ballots that the county board found to be ineligible, pursuant to [Numbered Memo 2022-05](#). This data identifies ballots that were potentially ineligible by reason of death, felony conviction, double votes, or removed or denied registrations. The county boards carefully review their records to ensure they were challenging only those ballots that were provably ineligible. This audit was performed following the nonpartisan primaries and elections in October and the elections in November.

Findings: As a result of the voter eligibility audit after the October primaries and elections, the county boards were informed of a possible 8 ineligible ballots cast because the voters may have cast their ballot and then died before Election Day, may have been serving a felony sentence as of Election Day, or were in a removed status. The county boards reviewed their records and determined that certain voters should not have their ballot in the count or that voters identified in the audit were eligible after all, such that their ballots were not removed from the count.

As a result of the voter eligibility audit after the November elections, the county boards were informed of a possible 81 ineligible ballots cast because the voters may have cast their ballot and then died before Election Day, may have been serving a felony sentence as of Election Day, or were in a removed or denied status. The county boards reviewed their records and determined that certain voters should not have their ballot in the count or that voters identified in the audit were eligible after all, such that their ballots were not removed from the count.