NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS
www.ncsbe.gov

Post-Election Audit Report for the General Election on November 3, 2026

Published November 24, 2026

Overview

The North Carolina State Board of Elections (State Board) is the state agency that oversees all primary and general elections in North Carolina. The State Board works closely with the 100 county boards of elections to ensure accessible, safe, secure, and accurate elections for more than 7.9 million registered voters.

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

The statewide 2026 general election was held on November 3, 2026, across all 100 counties in North Carolina. More than 4.2 million voters cast ballots, or a turnout of about 53.8% of the more than 7.8 million voters eligible to vote in these contests.

With post-election audits now complete, State Board staff presents the information below to the State Board members, who will vote on whether to certify the 2026 general election results at the State Board's canvass meeting on November 24, 2026.

Each section below 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 ballots complete an application as part of the ballot return envelope. These documents are used to assign voter history for each voter (i.e., a 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 applications with the number of physical ballots cast. These two numbers should match. However, they can be slightly off for various reasons. For example, voter history discrepancies may result from election worker error in assigning voter history to a voter, a voter checking in but then deciding not to vote, a voter leaving with their ballot, or a voter mistakenly inserting their provisional ballot into the tabulator.

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: As of the morning of November 24, 2026, all 100 counties have completed the voter history process for the November 2026 general election. This process involves assigning voter history to voters who cast ballots and reconciling that number with physical ballots cast. Of the 100 counties, 33 counties' voter histories and ballots cast matched exactly, while 46 counties had minor differences of three (3) ballots or fewer. There were also 21 counties that had four (4) or more differences, with 5 of those counties having a difference of ten (10) or more ballots. The absolute combined value of all variances for the 100 counties is 358 ballots or, on average, less than 4 ballots 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-to-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 other primaries and elections, these contests are often the top contest on the ballot. In the 2026 general election, the county boards counted the U.S. Senate contest.

These hand-count results are compared to the machine counts, and any variances are noted. The county boards of elections send 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-to-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 200 ballot groupings were chosen randomly statewide. Of the 200 samples, 170 were Election Day precincts, 18 were early voting sites, and 12 counties conducted a hand-to-eye audit of all absentee ballots.

Of the 200 samples audited, 16 had differences between machine counts and human hand-eye counts of three (3) votes or fewer. Most differences were attributed to human error in marking ballots, such as using check marks instead of filling in the bubble, or human error when conducting the sample audit. In Avery County, the sample audit found differences attributed to room disturbances causing confusion during the hand count. In Halifax County, the sample audit found differences attributed to ballots being re-scanned after a jam in the tabulator. Aside from the differences noted above, in all other counties, the machine counts and hand-eye counts matched exactly in the sampled precincts. In other words, in 182 of 200 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.

A table at the end of this report shows the differences along with an explanation.

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 each election. Although not required by law, this audit provides data on potentially ineligible early and absentee voters to the county boards of elections. This data identifies ballots that were potentially ineligible because the voter died, was serving a felony sentence, voted more than once, or had their registration removed or denied.

The data in the audit is based on the voter registration records in the state, as well as records and information from official government sources made available to the State Board (e.g., N.C. Department of Adult Correction felon data, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services death data). Additionally, the State Board included a new data source for the audit for the November 2026 general election: Social Security Administration data indicating that certain voters were deceased. Although voters who die in North Carolina will be reflected in the DHHS death data, the SSA data can also include voters who die in other states.

Once the audit data has been provided by the State Board, the county boards carefully review their records to ensure they challenge only those ballots that were provably ineligible. The county boards then challenge those ballots that they determined were ineligible prior to the challenge deadline, pursuant to Numbered Memo 2022-05. This audit also included similar data regarding voters who cast a provisional ballot, to assist the county boards of elections in their provisional research during the canvass period.

Findings: As a result of the voter eligibility audit after the November 2026 general election, the county boards were informed of a possible 447 ineligible early voting or absentee 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 registration status. The county boards reviewed their records and determined that 274 voters should be challenged and that their ballots should be removed from the count, once that challenge was upheld. The county boards also identified 151 voters in the audit who were eligible after all, such that their ballots should not be challenged or, after challenging the voter, determined their ballot should not be removed from the count because the county board was able to confirm the voter's eligibility at a hearing on the challenge. The county boards did not challenge 22 of the identified voters due to administrative error. Approximately 84 voters identified as potentially ineligible after the challenge deadline were not able to be challenged, as discussed in Numbered Memo 2022-05.

Sample Audit Differences

November 3, 2026 General Election

County	Sample Name	Candidate	Machine Count	Hand to Eye Count	Count Difference	Difference Explanation
AVERY	AVERY COUNTY POOL - THE DIVE IN	Michael Whatley	1683	1688	5	Room disturbances caused confusion while hand-counting.
AVERY	AVERY COUNTY POOL - THE DIVE IN	Roy Cooper	1321	1314	7	Room disturbances caused confusion while hand-counting.
BRUNSWICK	CB03_FRYING PAN	Michael Dublin	16	17	1	Voter did not mark inside the box correctly. Hand-to-eye count was able to determine voter intent.
BUNCOMBE	42.1_42.1	Michael Dublin	6	7	1	Voter made multiple marks. Machine read as overvote. Hand-to-eye count determined voter intent for candidate.
BUNCOMBE	42.1_42.1	Michael Whatley	205	206	1	Tabulator did not count a ballot with multiple marks. Hand-to-eye count was able to determine voter intent.
CASWELL	MILT_MILTON	Roy Cooper	228	229	1	Tabulator did not count a ballot with multiple marks. Hand-to-eye count was able to determine voter intent.
CRAVEN	GOVERNMENT CENTER EAST	Michael Whatley	3030	3028	2	Voters did not clearly mark bubbles, and audit team did not record them as votes.
CRAVEN	GOVERNMENT CENTER EAST	Roy Cooper	2736	2737	1	Voter marked their ballot with a checkmark, which may not have been counted by the machine, but voter intent was clear.
CUMBERLAND	G5B-2_CROSS CREEK 28-2-G5	Roy Cooper	233	234	1	Tabulator did not count a ballot with multiple marks. Hand-to-eye count was able to determine voter intent.
CURRITUCK	PB_POPLAR BRANCH	Roy Cooper	343	344	1	Likely human error during the hand count.
HALIFAX	RR 10	Roy Cooper	188	184	-4	A small number of ballots were mistakenly reinserted after a tabulator jammed. The sample hand-to-eye count team double-checked their results to ensure an accurate count.

County	Sample Name	Candidate	Machine Count	Hand to Eye Count	Count Difference	Difference Explanation
HALIFAX	RR 10	Michael Whatley	324	312	-12	A small number of ballots were mistakenly reinserted after a tabulator jammed. The sample hand-to-eye count team double-checked their results to ensure an accurate count.
HOKE	ROCKFISH COMMUNITY CENTER	Michael Whatley	1474	1472	2	Possible confusion among hand-to-eye counters
HOKE	ROCKFISH COMMUNITY CENTER	Roy Cooper	2925	2928	3	Possible confusion among hand-to-eye counters
HOKE	ROCKFISH COMMUNITY CENTER	Shannon W. Bray	68	67	1	Possible confusion among hand-to-eye counters
MOORE	ABSENTEE BY MAIL	Roy Cooper	1065	1066	1	Voter mismarked ballot. Hand-to-eye count was able to determine voter intent.
NORTHAMPTON	RICH S_RICH SQUARE	Roy Cooper	129	128	1	Likely human error during the hand count.
PENDER	PENDER COUNTY ANNEX BUILDING	Shannon W. Bray	128	130	2	Two voters mismarked ballots. Hand-to-eye count was able to determine voter intent.
ROBESON	21_PARKTON	Roy Cooper	208	207	1	Likely human error during the hand count.
ROCKINGHAM	MO_MONROETON	Michael Whatley	547	548	1	Ballot may not have been counted by machine, but was counted during hand count.
STANLY	0110_ALBEMARLE 10.1	Roy Cooper	177	179	2	Ballots unable to be counted by tabulator were included in hand-to-eye count.
UNION	028C_028C	Shannon W. Bray	9	10	1	Voter mismarked ballot. Hand-to-eye count was able to determine voter intent.
VANCE	KITT_KITT	Michael Whatley	446	448	2	Voter mismarked ballot. Hand-to-eye count was able to determine voter intent.
VANCE	KITT_KITT	Roy Cooper	289	288	1	Machine counted vote, but hand-to-eye count determined no voter intent.

County	Sample Name	Candidate	Machine Count	Hand to Eye Count	Count Difference	Difference Explanation
VANCE	SCRK_SCRK	Roy Cooper	373	372	1	Machine counted vote, but hand-to-eye count determined no voter intent.