

Rep. Hebl: Introduces bill to ensure confidence in election results

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Madison, Wisconsin – Gary Hebl (D-Sun Prairie) today announced that he is circulating a bill aimed at protecting Wisconsin elections from outside tampering. The bill, LRB-4589/1, would require the Wisconsin Elections Commission to perform risk-limiting audits. Risk-limiting audits are low-cost audits that use statistical data to determine which races are audited and the number of ballots that are recounted to ensure confidence in an election outcome.

“We live in a time where cyber security and cyberattacks on election equipment are growing concerns,” Hebl said. “U.S. intelligence agencies have found attempts to hack into several state election systems during last year’s election season, and we have even seen breaches, such as at Kennesaw State University in Georgia, where voting data could have been compromised.”

Wisconsin does already perform post-election audits, but they differ from risk-limiting audits in that they are meant to ensure voting machines are working properly, while risk-limiting audits ensure the correct election outcome. Colorado, which already has set up risk-limiting audits, has stated that they will make their auditing software free for other states to use.

“It’s a low-cost option to make sure that our elections are not being tampered with,” Hebl continued. “It’s also a more efficient audit. One report stated that Colorado would have cut the number of recounted ballots from more than 32,000 down to 142. Because of the low cost and high confidence of the outcomes, it’s a simple, sensible solution to ensure the people of Wisconsin can trust election results.”

The audits would begin on a pilot basis starting with the 2018 partisan primary and go into full effect in time for the 2020 partisan primary. The audits will be open to the public, must be completed six months after the election, and will be published on the Election Commissions website. It also requires the Elections Commission to periodically submit a report on the cost and value of performing the audits.