

Wisconsin Elections Commission: Approves expanded post-election audits

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MADISON, WI - The Wisconsin Elections Commission this week enhanced election security by approving a significant expansion of post-election audits to ensure the integrity of voting systems.

The Commission voted unanimously on Tuesday to require audits of voting equipment in 5 percent of the state's wards, including at least one in each of the 72 counties, and require completion of the audits before the Commission certifies the final results.

"The public is recognizing that post-election audits are an important tool," Commission Chair Dean Knudson said at the meeting. "You can see there's interest in elections and verifying results, and we want maximum confidence on the part of the electorate that the results that are reported are accurate and verifiable results."

Interim Administrator Meagan Wolfe said Wisconsin law has for many years required post-election voting equipment audits after each November General Election. "Decisions about how and when those audits must be conducted are delegated to the Commission," Wolfe said. "Because more rigorous post-election audits have been recommended as a best practice by many election experts, Commissioners felt it was important to use their authority to broaden Wisconsin's audit program. Their decision will expand the number of municipalities that conduct audits to ensure that voting equipment accurately counts ballots."

Under the voting equipment audit plan approved by the Commission, on the day after the election WEC staff will randomly select at least 183 wards across the state

to conduct audits. Municipal clerks for the selected wards will be notified and receive instructions on how to conduct the audits. Wisconsin has several different makes and models of voting equipment in use, and each type will be audited at least five times. At least one ward in each of the 72 counties will be selected, but no municipality will be selected for more than two audits. Audits must be completed by November 28, several days before the deadline for the WEC to certify results on Monday, December 3.

During the voting equipment audits, results from the randomly-selected ward will be hand counted twice to determine the error rate of the electronic voting equipment. The minimum federal standard is one error in 500,000 ballots. Because the audits will be completed before certification, any errors discovered will give county boards of canvassers the opportunity to more closely examine the election results.

The Commission also approved procedures for voluntary post-election audits that counties may conduct as part of the county board of canvassers process before they certify results in November. Current state law does not permit the WEC to order counties to conduct post-election audits.

Wolfe said the Commission approved procedures for voluntary post-election audits because some county clerks had asked Commission staff for guidance on how to conduct audits so they could provide the public with assurances that election results are accurate.

The two types of audits will provide opportunities to evaluate the performance of voting equipment and the accuracy of Election Night results by election officials at both the municipal and county levels. The WEC will reimburse local jurisdictions up to \$300 per audit, with additional reimbursement possible if funds are available.

Information about past voting equipment audits is available here: <https://elections.wi.gov/elections-voting/voting-equipment/audit>

Information about voluntary post-election audits for the August Partisan Primary is available here: <https://elections.wi.gov/node/5978>. Updated information for November will be posted soon.

For detailed information about steps the WEC has already taken to secure Wisconsin's elections for November 2018 and beyond, visit the WEC website: <https://elections.wi.gov/elections-voting/security>.