



# NASS

National Association  
of Secretaries of State

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## **NASS Task Force on Vote Verification: Post-election Audit Recommendations**

The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Task Force on Vote Verification is composed of eight Chief Election Official Secretaries of State. As experts in the field, the bipartisan task force came together to tackle the important issue of post-election audits to promote a greater public understanding of the processes, procedures, and necessary elements for successful audits.

### **Post-election Audits Overall**

Post-election audits are designed to ensure the accuracy of election results, verify the integrity of the election, and promote voter confidence in the election process. The term “post-election audit” may refer to a variety of election review procedures, including a “risk-limiting audit.” Post-election audits also vary among states based on each state’s unique laws and election systems. Audits should look for evidence that evaluates the effectiveness and durability of the procedures, processes, systems, and training.

Often a post-election audit seeks to verify election procedures were carried out properly, and that votes were counted accurately. As an example, comparing a hand count of ballots to the voting machine’s count. Post-election audits also generally take place in a designated percentage of randomly selected precincts, tabulators and/or ballots after the election.

As a note, post-election audits are different from recounts, which typically depend on the margin of victory and involve a recount of all ballots for a particular race.

### **Post-election Audit Recommendations**

The NASS Task Force on Vote Verification encourages states to consider the following recommendations for all types of post-election audits:

- States should have a requirement and timeframe, ideally in state statute, for post-election audits in place prior to an election. These defined requirements should include conducting the audit as soon as reasonably possible after an election, as well as a process to recertify election results based on the results of the audit.
- Ensuring chain of custody procedures throughout the post-election audit process is paramount. Election officials should be able to track the movement and transport of ballots, voting machines, and other election materials through witnesses, signature logs, security seals, video, etc. A break in the chain of custody increases the risk that the integrity or reliability of the asset cannot be restored. The [EAC Chain of Custody Best Practices document](#) and [CISA Chain of Custody and Critical Infrastructure Systems document](#) should be used as a reference when establishing these procedures.
- Have state and/or local election officials be an integral part of the post-election audit process, including in the selection of the precincts or equipment to be audited. The involvement of any

third-party entities, like a CPA firm, should be determined by the Chief State Election Official or state legislative act prior to an election, and those entities must work closely with election officials.

- The post-election audit methods and processes must be transparent. This includes identifying who may observe the audit, which should include members of the public, media, political party and/or candidate representatives. Once the results of the post-election audit are completed and certified, they should be made publicly accessible consistent with state law.
- To avert the possibility of voting systems becoming unusable, states should have criteria in place prior to an election for the use of a federally or a state accredited test lab to perform any audit of voting machine hardware or software.
- States should make every effort to educate the public on their post-election audit process, as well as other processes and procedures in place to ensure the accuracy and public trust of the results.

The Task Force on Vote Verification’s recommendations were accepted by NASS membership on August 16, 2021.

#### **Task Force on Vote Verification Members**

Members of the bipartisan task force were as follows:

- Hon. Maggie Toulouse Oliver, New Mexico Secretary of State
- Hon. Paul Pate, Iowa Secretary of State
- Hon. Michael Adams, Kentucky Secretary of State
- Hon. Steve Simon, Minnesota Secretary of State
- Hon. Kyle Ardoin, Louisiana Secretary of State
- Hon. Scott Schwab, Kansas Secretary of State
- Hon. Shenna Bellows, Maine Secretary of State
- Hon. Shemia Fagan, Oregon Secretary of State