

Ensuring That Our Votes Are Counted Accurately

Soon Maryland will begin using the most reliable, recountable voting system available: voter-marked paper ballots counted by optical scanners. But all computer-based systems are susceptible to error, malfunction, tampering, and misinterpretation of voter intent. The best way to ensure that our election results are correct is to compare the machines' totals to a hand/eye count of the same ballots to see if the votes add up to the same result.

Why Post-Election Audits?

- Verify that vote-tallying machines are functioning properly
- Find error, whether accidental or intentional
- Deter fraud
- Promote public confidence in elections
- Provide for continuous improvement in the conduct of elections

How Many Votes Should Be Audited?

This bill would require auditing all federal and state-wide races. Many states hand-count a fixed percentage of ballots, but this method often counts more votes than necessary in contests where the outcome was not in doubt and counts too few in tight races to be confident that the election results were correct.

Most experts agree that the most efficient and cost-effective type of audit is one based on the margin of victory in a race. This allows resources to be targeted to tight races where small errors could change the outcomes. This bill uses a statistically derived table to determine the votes to be counted based on the margin of victory.

Election Transparency

Casting of votes is a private act, but the counting of our votes should take place in full public view where everyone can see that our elections are conducted fairly. Transparency in the conduct of our elections is essential to ensure voter confidence in the results.

How Much Will This Cost?

Because the number of votes counted is based on the margin of victory, costs will vary from one election to another. The tables on the next pages estimate the costs of the 5 most recent past elections. The efficiency of statistically based audits keeps costs low, averaging roughly \$20,000 per election cycle (including both the primary and general elections), and as low as \$11,000. Even a close race such as the one in November 2008 in Congressional District 1 would have cost less than \$30,000 for Election Year 2008.



For more information, please contact Shelley Fudge, Co-Director
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Audit Cost Estimates 2000-2008

These tables show the estimated costs for auditing all federal and statewide races in both the primary and general elections in Maryland from 2000-2008.

- The number of precincts audited is based upon the margin of difference between the top two candidates in the race.
- The precincts are selected by means of a random draw from all the precincts in which the race appeared on the ballot.
- The number of random draws from the total pool of precincts in that race is determined by the charts in the legislation.
- Since it is mathematically possible to draw the same precinct more than once, when a large number of draws are required, the actual number of precincts to audit usually will be less than the number of draws.

To arrive at an estimated cost of auditing each race, the number of precincts to be audited was multiplied by the average number of ballots cast per precinct. This number of paper ballots to be hand-counted was then multiplied by \$0.20, which is the national average cost of hand-counting paper ballots (as reported by jurisdictions that already do hand-count audits).

2008 Primary

	% Margin of Difference	# of Draws	# of Precincts to Audit	COST*
Dem				
CD-1	9.38%	7	7	\$ 359
CD-2		0	0	\$ -
CD-3	78.16%	2	2	\$ 150
CD-4	21.97%	3	3	\$ 439
CD-5	65.20%	2	2	\$ 210
CD-6	7.38%	9	9	\$ 439
CD-7	86.10%	2	2	\$ 154
CD-8	78.49%	2	2	\$ 263
President	24.88%	7	7	\$ 672

Rep				
CD-1	10.34%	6	6	\$ 335
CD-2		0	0	\$ -
CD-3	6.66%	10	10	\$ 205
CD-4	13.61%	5	5	\$ 70
CD-5	15.13%	4	4	\$ 108
CD-6	69.09%	2	2	\$ 110
CD-7	46.41%	2	2	\$ 21
CD-8	12.59%	5	5	\$ 129
President	26.31%	5	5	\$ 175

2008 General

CD-1	0.79%	86	74	\$ 19,268
CD-2	47.07%	2	2	\$ 531
CD-3	39.60%	2	2	\$ 451
CD-4	72.95%	2	2	\$ 666
CD-5	49.64%	2	2	\$ 660
CD-6	18.99%	4	4	\$ 1,097
CD-7	60.92%	2	2	\$ 418
CD-8	53.41%	2	2	\$ 680
President	25.44%	5	5	\$ 1,439

TOTAL COST 2008 \$ 29,051

(*Calculated at a national average of \$0.20 per ballot per race)

2006 Primary

	% Margin of Difference	# of Draws	# of Precincts to Audit	COST*
Dem				
CD-1	10.22%	6	6	\$ 219
CD-2	64.65%	2	2	\$ 132
CD-3	6.48%	10	10	\$ 652
CD-4	3.32%	19	18	\$ 1,635
CD-5		0	0	\$ -
CD-6	18.41%	4	4	\$ 128
CD-7		0	0	\$ -
CD-8	82.64%	2	2	\$ 179
Senator	3.15%	60	59	\$ 3,804
Governor		0	0	\$ -
Att. Gen.	11.35%	17	17	\$ 955
Comptroll.	2.53%	72	71	\$ 4,577

Rep

CD-1		0	0	\$ -
CD-2	2.50%	25	24	\$ 389
CD-3	4.57%	14	14	\$ 256
CD-4		0	0	\$ -
CD-5		0	0	\$ -
CD-6	58.55%	2	2	\$ 95
CD-7		0	0	\$ -
CD-8	13.51%	5	5	\$ 73
Senator	84.10%	5	5	\$ 120
Governor		0	0	\$ -
Att. Gen.		0	0	\$ -
Comptroll.	6.52%	29	29	\$ 564

2006 General

CD-1	37.69%	2	2	\$ 389
CD-2	38.54%	2	2	\$ 377
CD-3	30.27%	2	2	\$ 362
CD-4	62.03%	2	2	\$ 389
CD-5	66.22%	2	2	\$ 389
CD-6	20.53%	3	3	\$ 596
CD-7	98.06%	2	2	\$ 236
CD-8	54.62%	2	2	\$ 490
Governor	6.53%	29	29	\$ 5,671
Att. Gen.	22.10%	7	7	\$ 1,310
Comptroll.	18.14%	10	10	\$ 1,885

TOTAL COST 2006 \$ 25,874

2004 Primary

	% Margin of Difference	# of Draws	# of Precincts to Audit	COST*
Dem				
CD-1	11.05%	6	6	\$ 172
CD-2		0	0	\$ -
CD-3	79.65%	2	2	\$ 94
CD-4	67.99%	2	2	\$ 128
CD-5		0	0	\$ -
CD-6	2.94%	22	21	\$ 586
CD-7	82.85%	2	2	\$ 85
CD-8	84.58%	2	2	\$ 165
President	34.05%	5	5	\$ 263
Senator	82.82%	5	5	\$ 249
Rep				
CD-1	23.84%	3	3	\$ 83
CD-2	24.79%	3	3	\$ 38
CD-3	63.86%	2	2	\$ 24
CD-4	10.49%	6	6	\$ 43
CD-5	3.74%	18	17	\$ 241
CD-6	50.03%	2	2	\$ 13
CD-7	9.27%	7	7	\$ 47
CD-8	29.49%	2	2	\$ 34
President		0	0	
Senator	40.02%	5	5	\$ 76

2004 General

CD-1	51.70%	2	2	\$ 467
CD-2	35.96%	2	2	\$ 476
CD-3	29.61%	2	2	\$ 444
CD-4	54.95%	2	2	\$ 579
CD-5	39.44%	2	2	\$ 571
CD-6	37.92%	2	2	\$ 508
CD-7	48.77%	2	2	\$ 356
CD-8	49.76%	2	2	\$ 639
President	12.98%	13	13	\$ 3,393
Senator	31.06%	5	5	\$ 1,270

TOTAL COST 2004 \$ 11,041

(*Calculated at a national average of \$0.20 per ballot per race)

2002 Primary

	% Margin of Difference	# of Draws	# of Precincts to Audit	COST*
Dem				
CD-1		0	0	\$ -
CD-2	14.09%	5	5	\$ 315
CD-3	80.02%	2	2	\$ 108
CD-4	66.55%	2	2	\$ 176
CD-5		0	0	\$ -
CD-6	4.68%	14	14	\$ 379
CD-7	82.88%	2	2	\$ 111
CD-8	2.87%	23	22	\$ 2,109
Governor	60.02%	5	5	\$ 297
Att. Gen.		0	0	\$ -
Comptroll.	40.81%	5	5	\$ 304

Rep				
CD-1	23.73%	3	3	\$ 128
CD-2	59.91%	2	2	\$ 47
CD-3	57.65%	2	2	\$ 34
CD-4	1.04%	64	54	\$ 591
CD-5		0	0	\$ -
CD-6		0	0	\$ -
CD-7		0	0	\$ -
CD-8		0	0	\$ -
Governor	89.17%	5	5	\$ 135
Att. Gen.	2.08%	90	88	\$ 1,774
Comptroll.	15.43%	10	10	\$ 194

2002 General

CD-1	53.52%	2	2	\$ 362
CD-2	8.59%	8	8	\$ 1,502
CD-3	31.54%	2	2	\$ 342
CD-4	57.75%	2	2	\$ 370
CD-5	38.75%	2	2	\$ 381
CD-6	32.31%	2	2	\$ 371
CD-7	47.14%	2	2	\$ 272
CD-8	4.22%	16	15	\$ 3,635
Governor	3.88%	47	46	\$ 8,582
Att. Gen.	30.41%	5	5	\$ 893
Comptroll.	36.37%	5	5	\$ 906

TOTAL COST 2002 \$ 24,318

2000 Primary

	% Margin of Difference	# of Draws	# of Precincts to Audit	COST*
Dem				
CD-1	2.59%	25	24	\$ 804
CD-2	11.47%	6	6	\$ 262
CD-3		0	0	\$ -
CD-4	76.21%	2	2	\$ 153
CD-5	61.35%	2	2	\$ 111
CD-6	30.27%	2	2	\$ 71
CD-7	0.00%	0	0	\$ -
CD-8	47.50%	2	2	\$ 144
President	38.87%	5	5	\$ 277
Senator	73.29%	5	5	\$ 253

Rep				
CD-1		0	0	\$ -
CD-2		0	0	\$ -
CD-3		0	0	\$ -
CD-4		0	0	\$ -
CD-5		0	0	\$ -
CD-6	55.61%	2	2	\$ 124
CD-7	51.98%	2	2	\$ 11
CD-8		0	0	\$ -
President	20.07%	7	7	\$ 288
Senator	5.53%	35	35	\$ 1,186

2000 General

CD-1	28.94%	2	2	\$ 371
CD-2	37.27%	2	2	\$ 500
CD-3	51.61%	2	2	\$ 346
CD-4	74.59%	2	2	\$ 437
CD-5	30.23%	2	2	\$ 489
CD-6	21.40%	3	3	\$ 692
CD-7	74.23%	2	2	\$ 225
CD-8	7.17%	9	9	\$ 2,985
President	16.39%	10	10	\$ 2,215
Senator	26.44%	5	5	\$ 1,064

TOTAL COST 2000 \$ 13,006

(*Calculated at a national average of \$0.20 per ballot per race)