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Maryland Begins Post-Election Result Audits

(Annapolis, MD May 17, 2024) To ensure and protect the integrity of election results, Maryland uses a multi-level audit process to aggregate, certify, and report election results. Transparency in these audit processes helps to dispel any dis- or misinformation. As a result of these audit processes, initial reported election results may be corrected with verified accurate counts.

On election night, election results from each of the certified ballot scanners are uploaded by a local election official to an election night reporting network. The election night results are unofficial. They are automatically posted to the State Board's website. The following day, in order to prevent any potential errors, Maryland requires a 100 percent verification audit of the upload process of the election results. This detailed process requires that the results be uploaded onto a certified internal network and verified against the unofficial results and log reports. If a discrepancy occurs, an investigation into the matter will follow.

After the 100% verification audit, an independent, third-party firm conducts a wholly separate, automated audit that relies solely on the use of their software to tabulate ballot images and verify vote totals. The results from the independent tabulation are then compared to the tabulation results from the voting system. The post-election tabulation audit is conducted using ballot images. The use of ballot images allows elections officials to maximize the technological functions of the new voting system while minimizing human error and eliminating chain of custody issues by using securely stored ballot images, rather than voted paper ballots. Results from this audit are available on SBE's website.

On May 15, after unofficial election night results were posted to the State Board website, the local boards of elections began the post-election verification audits of results. Yesterday, during the 100 percent verification audit process, it was discovered that the Baltimore City results in the unofficial election night reporting totals did not match the results in the certified internal reporting system. This triggered an automatic investigation by the local board in coordination with the State Board to determine the source of the variance. The review consists of performing the verification audit process twice. This double-check ensures that the results accurately reflect the ballots that voters cast on Election Day.

Based on the State Board's investigation and review, Baltimore City's unofficial election night reporting totals overreported the number of votes cast in the city by approximately 590 votes. The source of the overreport was identified as human error and resolved. The State Board and Baltimore City Board of Elections are confident that all votes canvassed up to this point have been aggregated and tabulated accurately. And the post-election audit of ballot images, conducted after every election in Maryland, will prove as much.

The ability of the State Board to quickly identify the issue and address it shows that the post-election result verification and post-election audits are integral to the voting process in Maryland. Our verification processes are working effectively. Voters can be assured that their votes were tallied accurately, and this will be verified with the post-election audit processes.

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