

Ballot Count Audit Instructions-Guidelines

An “audit” is defined as an independent examination of records. All voters sign an “Application to Vote.” These are the original documents. They need to be examined to determine the number of voters who attempted to vote.

On election day, after the voter’s signature on the Application to Vote is witnessed by a sworn election official, the application is countersigned by the election official (actually, they only need to initial the application) after they verify that the applicant is listed in the Qualified Voter File. Finally, the number of the ballot issued to the voter is recorded on the Application to Vote.

The “Ballot Count Audit” consists of examining and counting all of the Applications to Vote. Counting these original official documents, one for each voter, gives the number of voters who attempted to vote on election day.

To do an audit of the ballot count you will need to visit the office of your city or township Clerk. Here are the steps:

1. Select an election date and precinct (the one where you vote, or any other precinct).
For an election where the ballot contained a federal race, the public documents you need to see must be retained for 22 months following the election date. For a local or school election, the documents need only be retained for 30 days after certification. This means you must make your request before the deadline. (A new 2012 law extends the retention of applications to vote to six years.)
2. Call ahead and make an appointment. Tell the clerk that you wish to view public records, specifically:
 - a. The *Applications to Vote*
Give the date and precinct you want to audit.
 - b. The Clerk’s copy of the “*Optical Scan Statement of Votes*” for that election.
This is a page at the back of the *Poll Book*.

{Note: If you are denied access to these records, state that you wish to file your request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).¹ All you need to do is to write down your request and date it. FOIA includes a process by which the Clerk must respond by providing access within five days, by requesting a ten-day extension, or by giving a legal reason for denial. However, since there are no reasons for denial of access to these public documents. You may need to contact MERA for assistance in challenging a denial. (Call Michael-David BenDor at (734) 484-1628)}

3. At your appointment with the township or city Clerk, ask to review and count the applications to vote for the precinct you have selected. We recommend that you use the tally method of counting, which is more accurate than only stacking in groups. (The best practice is to do both.)

The tally method involves making a “tally” mark on a sheet of paper. After making four marks, the fifth mark is made as a line through the others. To complete the tally

¹The Michigan Attorney General’s Opinion #7247 gives a complete explanation of this. It can be found at: <http://www.ag.state.mi.us/opinion/datafiles/2010s/op10324.htm>

count, after examining all the applications, simply count the tally groups and multiply by five.

The applications can be stacked in groups of 10 and the stacks can be counted, multiplying by 10 as a check against the tally count.

The Clerk may insist on doing the count rather than allowing you to handle the applications. In any case, you should make the tally and be sure to inspect each application to make sure it is complete and has a ballot number written in as well as the election inspector's initials.

It will make things easier if you have one or two others to help with the counting. If multiple people are watching and making a tally, it increases the accuracy of the count. Keep track of how long you spend (and please note the time and number of people working on the audit on the back of the report.)

Record your count on the Precinct Ballot Count Audit Report in the “# of Audited Applications to Vote” Box.

4. Ask to see the Clerk's copy of the “*Optical Scan Statement of Votes*”.

This is a page at the back of the Poll Book (see blank sample attached). You do not need to see the entire Poll Book, which is retained by the County Clerk.

5. The *Statement of Votes* contains two numbers that you will need to record for this audit. On the half page headed, “3, *Certificate of Election Inspectors*,” on the left side, there is a box for the number of voters and a box for the number of ballots tabulated. Enter these numbers in the corresponding boxes in your blank *Precinct Ballot Count Audit Report* form. (*The number of voters according to this Poll Book and The number of ballots reported tabulated in Poll Book*).

The discrepancy between your count of Applications to Vote and the number of Ballots reported in the Poll Book is a simple subtraction. If they are the same number, there is no discrepancy and the number is zero. To calculate the percentage discrepancy divide the difference in the number of ballots by the number of ballots reported in the Poll Book. Then express this number as a percentage. For instance, if the number of Applications counted was 930 and the number of ballots reported in the Poll Book was 922, the difference is 8. That is the discrepancy. (It does not matter if the difference is a positive or negative number—only there is a difference.)

To calculate the percentage, divide the discrepancy 8 by 922, which is $8/922=0.008676$. As a percentage, it is 0.87% (rounded to hundredths of a percent). [Note: In 2012 the first congressional district in Michigan was decided by 0.47%]

Please complete the rest of the report. If more than one person participated in the audit, please make a note of them and their time on the back of the report.

Finally, please send a copy of your report to:

AMERA, PO BOX 981246, Superior Township, MI 48198-1246



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