

Office of the Secretary of the State  
Post-Election Audit Procedures  
Optical Scan Voting Equipment  
(For use in audits following February 5, 2008 Primary)

## **PURPOSE**

Pursuant to Public Act 07-194, mandatory post-election hand count audits are to be conducted by Registrars of Voters in ten percent (10%) of the voting districts randomly selected to participate. These audits shall be open to public inspection. This document outlines the procedures to be employed in conducting any such audits. For audits related to the February Presidential Primary, both Democratic and Republican races will be audited.

The primary purpose of the hand count audit is to assess how well the optical scan voting machines functioned in an actual election and to ensure that votes cast using these machines are counted properly and accurately.

Please note: This is not a recount where the focus is reviewing each ballot to determine voter intent in rendering a final vote count. Rather, the audit tests whether the machines accurately counted ballots that were properly marked. Therefore, a critical part of the audit process is to separate ballots into groups: (1) ballots that are properly marked by voters (i.e., marked in such a way that one would expect the optical scan machine to be able to scan and read such ballots); and (2) ballots that one expects would not be read by the machine (e.g., voter circles a candidate's name, places a check mark next to a candidate's name).

## **GETTING READY FOR THE AUDIT**

### **1. SELECTION OF AUDIT TIME AND PLACE**

Each municipality may set its audit date individually. Audits may be conducted on or after February 20, 2008 and must be completed no later than March 7, 2008. **Please notify the Office of the Secretary of the State of the audit date and location(s) at least three business days in advance of the audit.** The selected date must also be made publicly available. Any number of means may be used (posting notice in Town Hall and outside the Registrars' office, posting notice on the municipality's website or newspaper advertisement)

### **2. SELECTION OF AUDIT PERSONNEL**

The Registrars of Voters have the responsibility for identifying appropriate workers to conduct the hand count audit. These individuals do not have to be the same individuals who worked at the polls on Election or Primary Day, but should be familiar with the procedures for counting paper ballots. Assistance for the audit may be solicited from municipalities not involved in an audit. If possible, poll workers from the Republican and Democratic Parties (in an election) or from opposing slates (in a primary) should be equally represented. If this is not possible, other appropriate poll workers may be used. The individuals selected are required to take an oath before performing their required duties.

### **3. DELIVERY OF THE AUDIT MATERIALS**

**NOTE: Only those ballots that were counted by the optical scan voting machine in the district will be included in the audit. Absentee ballots counted centrally or by hand are not included in the audit.**

On the day of the audit, all ballot materials must be delivered to the audit location by two individuals of separate political parties or opposing slates (in a primary), if possible. Optical scanners are not part of the audit and should not be brought to the audit location.

All audit procedures shall be open to public inspection and administered by the Registrars of Voters. **Ballots should remain sealed and secure and no activities related to the audit should begin until the announced time of the audit.**

## **CONDUCTING THE AUDIT**

### **Step 1: Confirm Security of the Ballots**

When the audit begins, audit workers shall first examine the seal or protective tape on each of the ballot depository containers. **This seal number should be checked by two individuals, written down on the attached forms, announced publicly, and then compared to the number recorded on the moderator's report.**

If any of the seals referred to above have been broken, or are different from that applied on Election or Primary night, the Registrars shall immediately notify the Elections Division of Office of the Secretary of the State.

### **Step 2: Determine which ballots are to be included in the Audit**

Once the balloting materials have been removed from their respective containers, all ballots shall be reviewed and sorted by two individuals from opposite political parties or opposing slates (in a primary), if possible, to determine which ballots will be part of the audit.

**NOTE: Only those ballots that were counted by the optical scan voting machine in the district will be included in the audit. That includes: all ballots taken from the machine-read main section of the ballot bin; and all write-in ballots taken from the machine-read, write-in section of the ballot bin.**

**Any ballots counted by hand on Election or Primary Day are not included in the audit. Absentee ballots counted centrally are not included in the audit. These ballots should be secured and put aside to ensure that they are not included in the audit.**

### **Step 3: Count Total Number of Ballots and Separate Democratic and Republican Ballots**

Count Total Number of Ballots: The total number of paper ballots read by the optical scan machines should be recorded and used as a check to assure that all ballots counted by the machine are included in the audit. This number can be determined by a separate count of the number of ballots before counting the votes, perhaps while carefully separating the ballots into batches to be counted by teams. This number should be the same as the public counter.

For the Presidential Primary, ballots read by the optical scanner must be separated by color between the Democratic and Republican Primary, and then Steps 4 and 5 below should be followed for each race/party. The separation can be accomplished as part of counting the total number of ballots by counting the number of ballots in each party's primary and then totaling those numbers.

### **Step 4: Sorting the Ballots**

Each ballot shall be examined by two individuals from opposite political parties (in an election) or slates (in a primary). In case of a disagreement, the Registrars of Voters shall make the final decision on categorizing ballots.

The ballots should be assigned to one of the following two categories:

“Undisputed Ballots” - The first category of ballots includes those ballots that both individuals agree should have been read by the optical scan voting machine. In other words, a review of the ballot in question reveals that each oval is completely filled in, there are no apparent problems, voter errors, unusual markings or noticeable stray marks in or **around any of the races to be audited**. This shall include any write-in ballots and over-voted ballots.

“Ballots with Questionable Votes”—Ballots that contain problems, voter errors (e.g., circling a candidate's name), stray or unusual markings **in any of the races being audited** should be placed in this category because such problems, errors or markings may have interfered with the optical scan machine's count. Here, audit workers agree that the ballots may not have been read by the optical scan voting machine.

## **Step 5: Counting the Ballots**

Count the Total for Each Candidate: Once the ballots are separated, the audit workers shall count the votes for each candidate in each of the audited races on each ballot—first, from the Undisputed Ballots, i.e., ballots with no questionable markings; next, from the Ballots with Questionable Votes, i.e., **where questionable markings appear for the particular race and candidate**. The audit workers will keep separate vote totals for each candidate from both categories of ballots.

Note: In order to minimize tallying errors, it is recommended that audit workers subdivide ballots into “batches” for ease of counting and for detecting human tallying errors. Batch size may vary, but experience shows that batches of no more than 50 ballots are easiest to manage and track. It may also be useful to assign two workers, from different parties if possible, to tally--make "hash marks" for -- each batch and to reconcile their subtotals after completing each batch of ballots. Each batch of ballots should be numbered and separate tally sheets prepared for each batch. The batches and their respective tally sheets should remain separate in order to make reconciliation, if necessary, easier for audit workers.

## **REPORTING BALLOT TOTALS**

The results of this manual audit shall be recorded on the attached form. Do not leave any space empty. Incomplete forms will not be accepted. For each candidate in each office being audited, the total hand count of “undisputed ballots” should be recorded in Column D on the attached form and the total hand count of “Questionable Votes” should be recorded in Column E.

## **HANDLING DISCREPANCIES**

If Column C (the machine total) is different from Column F (the overall hand count total), then every effort should be made to investigate and explain why such is the case, including conducting a second hand count, if necessary. Any difference should be reported to the Secretary of the State.

If the results of the audit reveal any unexplained deviations or errors, The University of Connecticut (UConn VoTeR Center), at the request of the Registrars or Secretary of the State, shall examine the machines that apparently produced incorrect results to determine if such errors were caused by the optical scan voting machine.

## **CLOSING THE AUDIT**

At the completion of the audit, all ballot materials shall be resealed and returned to a secure location and the optical scanners shall remain sealed until such time as the Secretary of the State notifies each municipality that the voting machine seals can be removed and the memory cards can be reprogrammed for any future election.

## **CONTINUATION OF THE AUDIT AT ANOTHER TIME**

If the audit is to be continued in another session, the following steps should be taken to ensure the security of the ballot:

(1) The ballots should be resealed in the bag and opened again at the start of the subsequent session; (2) New seal numbers must be recorded at the end of one session and the start of the next; (3) Observers present and the Secretary of the State's office should be notified at the end of the session of the date, time and location of the continuation of the audit; and (4) All audit materials should be delivered by the Registrars of Voters to a secure location during the interim period between audit sessions.

## **ROLE OF OBSERVERS**

The State of Connecticut is committed to an open, public, transparent process. Public Act 07-194 specifically provides that the audit "shall be open to public inspection." This means that observers should be allowed to view every aspect of the proceedings, including being close enough: (1) to actually see ballots as they are being counted; (2) to see tally sheets as they are being marked and when they are complete; (3) to see report forms to be sent to the Office of the Secretary of the State; (4) to be able to verify that the counts from tally sheets are properly added and conform to the totals on the report forms; and (5) to view any other documents created in the process and to ask questions of Registrars regarding the process. Observers should be allowed freedom of movement sufficient to enable them to view the items described above.

However, it lies within the discretion of the Registrars of Voters to ensure that no observer disrupts the integrity or the orderliness of the process.