

Appendix G

Vote Auditing

How accurate are elections? Voting system standards are established at the federal and state levels. Electronic equipment and paper ballot procedures are tested against these standards. Voting systems are tested to industry standards higher than those practiced in similar industries, such as standards applied to banking and ATM technology. Under Nevada law, a voting system and any modification to a voting system must be approved by the Secretary of State before it can be used in any election (NRS 293B.105).

In this educator resource, students will dive into election auditing, test their auditing abilities, and discuss ways to improve elections.

In combination with exemplary industry standards, state and local election officials utilize numerous security measures and best practices to ensure all votes are accurately cast and tabulated. Examples of state and local voting system and ballot security measures include, but are not limited to, several testing procedures, using tamper evident security devices, implementing a chain-of-custody, and securely storing ballots and equipment.

For more information about voting systems, standards, and security practices, please contact your county election office or the office of the Secretary of State. Additionally, information about the voting system equipment used in each county is available online at <https://www.nvsos.gov/sos/elections/election-resources/voting-system>.

In the classroom, students might try the following:

- The Nevada Student Mock election permits schools to cast paper ballots. If your school or class is using paper ballots, have students participate in this part of the voting process by a) tabulating the ballots, b) auditing the tabulated ballots to ensure the accuracy of the county, and c) report vote totals on the Student Mock Election website in the School Administrator login area. Things to consider are in the following items.
- If your school is voting in the Student Mock Election on a paper ballot or if a class is voting by a paper ballot, audit these paper ballots or create a deck of paper ballots to audit. Divide students into small groups and have each group tabulate the ballots. Task student groups with coming up with their own method and rules for auditing ballots. Once in groups, have students look at a single blank ballot and write down a few bullet points about how they plan to tabulate the ballots. Have students count the ballots and track if and how they change their rules, if at all. Have other groups count the same ballots using their own methods. At the end of the period, have students discuss how each group decided to tabulate ballots, how things changed (if at all), and how each group resolved problem contest selections.
- What constitutes a vote? Have students work in small groups to research what type of ballot(s) are used in their election jurisdiction. Have students identify or come up with different ways ballot selections might be made on the same ballot and whether the mark on the ballot counts as a valid vote selection (filling in an oval with a check mark, "x", etc.). Additionally, students might research how ballot selections vary across the country. For example, some election jurisdictions require voters to vote on electronic voting equipment, others require voters to fill in an arrow, while others require voters to fill in an oval.
- Have students determine if voting equipment audits are required in their state, what kind (if any), and observe a post-election audit conducted by local election officials.
- Compare post-election audits and risk-limiting audits.
- Discuss ways to improve ballot tabulation and election auditing processes.