

2026 PRIMARY NORTH DAKOTA POST-ELECTION AUDIT REPORT



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CONTACT

If you have questions regarding information contained in this manual, please contact:



ELECTIONS DIVISION

600 East Boulevard Avenue Dept 108
Bismarck ND 58505-0500

Phone: (701) 328-4146

Toll-Free: (800) 352-0867, ext. 328-4146

Email: soselect@nd.gov

Vote.ND.Gov

REVIEW THE LAWS

NORTH DAKOTA CONSTITUTION AND THE NORTH DAKOTA CENTURY CODE

You will find it helpful to familiarize yourself with the sections of law that apply to the post-election audit process. North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) § 16.1-06-15 provides for the post-election audit processes for statewide elections. This report provides the results of the 2026 Primary Election post-election audit.

WHY POST-ELECTION AUDITS ARE CONDUCTED

Post-election audits are a key element in ensuring the integrity of elections and maintaining public trust. North Dakota's decision to complete post-election audits highlights its proactive approach to addressing concerns about election transparency and accuracy. North Dakota audits are designed to determine if tabulation methods are working correctly and counting votes accurately. Additionally, this post-election audit validates election outcomes and identifies potential areas of improvement in election administration.

North Dakota's audits demonstrate a commitment to accountability and supporting local election officials in refining their practices. This dual purpose of verification and continuous improvement strengthens the overall electoral process and helps to reassure voters about the legitimacy of election outcomes.

North Dakota Century Code § [16.1-06-15](#) outlines the process of conducting post-election audits. In conjunction with guidance from the Office of the Secretary of State, this statute section ensures that county election officials and the public have clear guidance on the audit process. The primary objectives of these audits are to:

- Validate the accuracy of election results.
- Ensure election voting tabulators are functioning correctly.
- Confirm adherence to election policies and practices.

AUDIT METHODOLOGY

After Election Day but before the meeting of the County Canvassing Board, the Secretary of State selects a random polling location in each of North Dakota's 53 counties to be audited. The location chosen ensures a larger control group of ballots from various county precincts to be audited by each county. There are no counties exempt from the post-election audit process. The chosen locations fall into the below categories:

- Election Day polling locations
- Early Vote in-person polling locations
- Absentee precinct

The Secretary of State also determines the contests or races in each polling location to be audited. No other contests on the ballot or in the polling location are audited. The contests audited must be chosen from the below categories:

- One federal contest
- One statewide contest
- One legislative contest (if the polling location contains a legislative race)
- One county contest

Prior to the post-election audit commencing, the county auditor hires a post-election audit board by following the same processes in which they hire election boards. There is no limitation to the number of post-election audit board members to conduct post-election audit tasks.

The post-election audit begins on the 6th day following Election Day and must conclude by the 8th day following Election Day. The county auditor notices the date, time, and location of the post-election audit.

The results and supporting documentation are immediately sent to the Secretary of State following the post-election audit. This report is an overview of the analysis of the results, the hand eye ballot review, and the tabulated results of the post-election audit.

Each county follows the same steps when conducting the post-election audit. The county recorder delivers the ballots to be audited to the post-election audit board. The board reviews 5% of the total ballots cast at the polling location with a minimum audit quantity of 25 ballots and a maximum audit quantity of 300 ballots.

The steps followed include:

- **Document Review:** The post-election audit board reviews election documentation to verify voter check-ins match the number of ballots cast.
- **Ballot Review:** The post-election audit board manually reviews and tallies the ballots from the selected polling location and contests.
- **Results Comparison:** The post-election audit board tabulates the ballots reviewed and tallied to verify the equipment tabulation matches the manual tally.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ---

The Office of the Secretary of State oversees statewide primary elections and general elections and works closely with 53 county auditors to ensure accessible, safe, secure, and accurate elections for the voters of North Dakota.

A total of 125,255 voters cast ballots in the 2026 Primary Election, a turn-out of 20.86% of eligible voters.

Secretary of State Michael Howe and election team members met individually with each county auditor to review the outcomes of the post-election audit and provide areas for process improvements in future elections. Additionally, county auditors were able to offer feedback and request additional resources to assist in election administration.

The 2026 Primary Post-Election Audit reaffirmed the integrity and accuracy of the state's election processes. All 53 counties participated, with each audit confirming that manual ballot reviews matched equipment tabulation results. The post-election audits demonstrated strict adherence to laws and procedures, and highlighted areas for process improvement, primarily focused on increased training of election boards and county officials to ensure election documentation and chain of custody practices are understood.

The results of this audit show that the certified and tested machines used to count ballots in North Dakota do so with great accuracy and efficiency.

The overall outcomes of the audit included:

- **Equipment Accuracy**

Manual post-election audit results match equipment tabulation results in every county demonstrating the accuracy of election equipment.

- **Universal Compliance**

All counties completed and submitted audit documentation correctly. Laws and processes were followed by county officials and election boards.

- **Process Compliance**

Every county's audit was successful and demonstrated best practice and process compliance through chain of custody and ballot reconciliation documentation.

- **Process Improvements**

Some counties were advised to improve processes through increased training of county officials and election boards to better understand documentation practices, chain of custody procedures, and understanding of statutory requirements. These recommendations are intended to further strengthen the process and ensure uniformity statewide. A summary of these recommendations is below:

- Better documentation of ballot balance statements.
- Understanding process related to sealing ballot boxes and documenting chain of custody.
- Ensuring all election board members sign required documentation.
- Using state templates for documentation and chain of custody.
- Including city contests on consolidated ballots.
- Improving communication between recorders and auditors.
- Attending all available training courses and reviewing provided resources.

COUNTY-BY-COUNTY BREAKOUT

Results in each of the counties were measured against the following:

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
- Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
- Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
- Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.

Counties listed below completed the audit successfully with no recommendations:

**BARNES
BENSON
BILLINGS
BOTTINEAU
BOWMAN
BURKE
CAVALIER
DICKEY
DUNN
FOSTER**

**GOLDEN VALLEY
GRAND FORKS
GRANT
HETTINGER
KIDDER
LOGAN
MCKENZIE
MCLEAN
NELSON
PIERCE**

**RENVILLE
SARGENT
SHERIDAN
SLOPE
STUTSMAN
TOWNER
WARD
WILLIAMS**

Recommendations for process improvements were made to the following counties:

ADAMS

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county officials and election boards to understand the tracking of unvoted ballots on the Statement of Ballots Received and Returned.
 - Recommend increased training of county officials for increased understanding of Electionware Balance Statement. Only one document is needed and the county should verify the public count is at zero before loading election results. Point of clarity – no test results were included in the final upload of results but the documentation should reflect that.
 - Recommend increased training of election boards to ensure DS200 ballot box is sealed following verification it is empty at the opening of polls.
- Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
- Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
- Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.

BURLEIGH

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of election boards to ensure ballot boxes are sealed and information is documented on the DS200 Chain of Custody.
 - Recommend increased training of election boards to ensure all members are signing required documentation.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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CASS

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Cass County uses a different chain of custody form than the state template for election equipment used at polling locations. Recommend including a section for election boards to verify the number of ballots cast on each DS200 along with total ballots cast. Additionally, the entire election board should be verifying and signing the chain of custody documentation.
 - Recommend increased training of county officials for better understanding of the Statement of Ballots Received and Returned which should include ballot quantities by style per polling location and the entire election board should be verifying and signing the Statement of Ballots Received and Returned.
 - Recommend increased training for county officials for increased understanding of the Post-Election Audit Chain of Custody which should be granular and include the total number of ballots cast at the polling location to account for each ballot instead of the number of packages delivered.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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DIVIDE

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend adding all city contests to the statewide consolidated ballot to eliminate side ballots and better serve the voters of Divide County.
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EDDY

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased communication with recorder to deliver all ballots from the selected location to the auditor to conduct the audit.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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EMMONS

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county election officials to ensure understanding of Electionware Balance Statement and information needed to be completed on the document.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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GRIGGS

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county election officials to ensure understanding of Electionware Balance Statement and information needed to be completed on the document.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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LAMOURE

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county election officials to ensure understanding of Electionware Balance Statement and information needed to be completed on the document.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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MCHENRY

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend adding all city contests to the statewide consolidated ballot to eliminate side ballots and better serve the voters of McHenry County.
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MCINTOSH

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - **Process Improvements:**
 - Recommend additional training for election boards on the Statement of Ballots Received and Returned for increased understanding of processes and how the documentation needs to be completed.
 - Recommend additional training of county team members on the Electionware Balance Statement for increased understanding of processes and how the documentation needs to be completed.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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MERCER

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county officials and election boards to understand the tracking of unvoted ballots on the Statement of Ballots Received and Returned.
 - Recommend increased training of election boards to ensure DS200 ballot box is sealed following verification it is empty at the opening of polls.
 - Recommend increased training of county officials to better understand how to edit and complete required documentation for better understanding and tracking of processes.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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MORTON

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of election boards to ensure DS200 ballot box is sealed following verification it is empty at the opening of polls.
 - Recommend increased training of election boards to ensure results transfer bag is sealed during transfer of results to county.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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MOUNTRAIL

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of election boards to ensure DS200 ballot box is sealed following verification it is empty at the opening of polls.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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OLIVER

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county officials to ensure programming is sealed properly on equipment.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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PEMBINA

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county officials to ensure better understanding of completion of documentation that needs to be completed.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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RAMSEY

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county officials to ensure documentation is utilized by election boards and not completed by the county. Election boards are required to verify seal numbers, no ballots cast, and other verifications prior to opening of polls.
 - Recommend usage of state templates to ensure all information is accounted for and proper procedures are being followed with statute changes.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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RANSOM

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county officials and election boards on the Statement of Ballots Received and Returned to ensure all ballots are properly documented by election boards.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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RICHLAND

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend additional training for election boards on the Statement of Ballots Received and Returned to ensure all ballots (spoiled, voted, unvoted, set-aside) are properly documented.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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ROLETTE

- Post-election audit documentation was submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend that Chain of Custody and Statement of Ballots Received and Returned should be completed ahead of election day and included with documentation delivered to inspector/election board/polling location before polls open.
 - Recommend only election boards should be completing the signatures on the required documentation.
 - Recommend increased training of election boards and county officials to understand laws and processes needing to be followed each election.
 - Improvement at the county level is necessary for increased understanding of laws and processes.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend attending all trainings provided in-person and virtually.
 - Recommend county officials review the resources provided for a better understanding of laws and processes. Resources include recordings, documentation, and manuals outlining processes for county officials and election boards.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy of election equipment.
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SIOUX

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of election boards to ensure DS200 ballot box is sealed following verification it is empty at the opening of polls and documentation is completed in full.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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STARK

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend additional training for election boards on the Statement of Ballots Received and Returned to ensure all ballots (spoiled, voted, unvoted, set-aside) are properly documented.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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STEELE

- Post election audit documentation was submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend utilizing the Electionware Balance Statement by the county on election night.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of election boards to ensure DS200 ballot box is sealed following verification it is empty at the opening of polls and documentation is completed in full.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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TRAILL

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend additional training for election boards on the Chain of Custody and Statement of Ballots Received and Returned to ensure all ballots (spoiled, voted, unvoted, set-aside) are properly documented.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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WALSH

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend increased training of county officials to better understand the laws and processes needing to be followed each election.
 - Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
 - Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.
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WELLS

- All post-election audit documentation was completed correctly and submitted.
 - **Process Improvements**
 - Recommend utilizing current documentation to ensure all appropriate data fields are being accounted for at the polling location.
- Laws and processes were followed correctly by the county and election boards.
- Manual post-election audit results matched equipment tabulation post-election audit results.
- Post-election audit was successful and demonstrated accuracy.

NORTH DAKOTA
SECRETARY STATE



RESULT OF "YES" VOTE: The...
RESULT OF "NO" VOTE: The... retains provisions giving cr...
specified constitutional ri...
prosecutions/juvenile delinquency
proceedings, but denyi...
court processes to enforce these

Yes

No

MICHAEL HOWE | NORTH DAKOTA SECRETARY OF STATE

600 E BOULEVARD AVENUE, DEPT 108, BISMARCK, ND 58505-0500

ELECTIONS DIVISION

701-328-4146

soselect@nd.gov

VOTE.ND.GOV