

WHAT IS A RISK-LIMITING AUDIT?

In a risk-limiting audit (RLA), election offices use a combination of statistical methods and a human review of ballots to confirm that the outcome of an election is correct.

To conduct this audit, we review a random sample of ballots to confirm that our voting machines accurately interpreted every voter's selections and accurately tabulated the results. If a contest's vote count from a set of randomly selected ballots is statistically consistent with the full machine count, we can be confident that the outcome is accurate.

The November 2024 RLA is a statewide effort coordinated by the Virginia Department of Elections through centralized RLA software. Each jurisdiction uses this software to conduct the audit for the votes cast in their precincts.

There are two approved methods for conducting RLAs in Virginia:

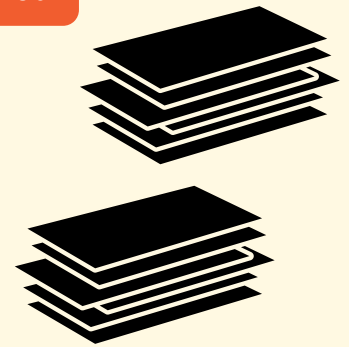
Ballot-Polling Method

- Randomly select a statistically significant number of individual ballots.
- Hand count the ballots.
- Compare the margin of victory from this set of ballots against that of the full reported results.
- If the random selection of ballots has a similar or greater margin of victory, we have sufficient evidence to be confident that the reported results are accurate.
- If not, pull a larger number of randomly selected ballots and compare again. (This process could potentially continue up to a full hand count.)



Batch-Comparison Method

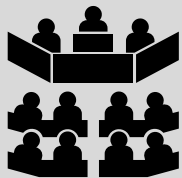
- Randomly select a particular batch of ballots (generally one precinct).
- Hand count the ballots.
- Compare these results against the results of the machine count for this batch.
- Examine any discrepancies in the counts. If there are no statistically significant differences, we can be confident that the reported results are accurate.



What are we auditing?



- **U.S. Senate contest**
 - This is a statewide contest. This means all Virginia jurisdictions, including Fairfax County, are participating.
 - Conducted using the **ballot-polling** method.



- **One U.S. House of Representatives contest**
 - One of the 11 U.S. congressional districts in Virginia (the 1st district) was randomly selected for an RLA. If the district had been one of the three congressional districts in Fairfax County (8th, 10th, or 11th), then Fairfax County would have participated.
 - Conducted using the **batch-comparison** method.

How does the audit work?



- We prepare a "ballot manifest," a catalog that lists every box of ballots by precinct.



- An RLA software (used across the state) randomly selects ballots from the ballot manifest that must be pulled from the boxes.



- These specific boxes are retrieved from secure storage at the Fairfax County courthouse.



- We use a robust chain of custody process to ensure ballot boxes are always accounted for.



- In the ballot-polling method, we locate specific ballots either by counting down to the correct ballot or using precision scales.



- A bipartisan audit board examines each ballot and records the results of the contest.



- The results of the human tallies are compared against the results of the machine counts.



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