



From the Office of Secretary of State John A. Gale

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Election audit confirms accuracy of tabulated results in 2016 general

LINCOLN – A hand count of ballots in 38 randomly selected precincts across Nebraska revealed few problems. Secretary of State John Gale says results point to the reliability and accuracy of optical scanners used to read those ballots in the 2016 general election. A total of 860,573 ballots were cast and counted in that election.

Following each statewide general election, a manual audit is conducted. Thirty-eight precincts were randomly selected for audit in 31 counties, which is about two and a half percent of all precincts. Gale said having a process that checks the accuracy of the equipment is essential to fostering confidence among voters that ballots counted in all 93 are handled the same way with similar results.

Votes cast in the following races were hand counted from ballots in the selected precincts: president, one state race and one local race. Results from the hand count were then compared to machine tabulations obtained for those races. Any discrepancies were noted by the county election official.

Gale said minor discrepancies were reflected on 12 votes in five precincts from four counties. A total of 15,107 ballots were hand counted as part of the audit.

In one county, two extra votes were included in the hand count, which appeared to have been the result of a voter marking and then erasing ovals that were not read by the machine.

In another county, two light marks were not read by the machine, but were included in the hand count.

In a third county, the voter used checkmarks instead of filling in the ovals on the ballot. The machine rejected the marks that extended outside the ovals, which were then included in the hand count.

In the fourth county, differences were noted in the tally of votes from two separate precincts. In one of those precincts, two candidates gained an additional vote each and two candidates lost a vote each. In the second precinct, two candidates gained an additional vote each and one candidate lost a vote. The county election official attributed the differences to mistakes made during hand counting of the ballots.

“None of the issues identified affected the outcome of any races,” noted Gale. Additionally, none of the issues were related to problems with the tabulation equipment, meaning that they worked as they should have on Election Day.”

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