

Testimony to
House Appropriations – E&E Division
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Regarding Election Results Reporting Process

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and committee members, I'm Donnell Preskey with the North Dakota Association of Counties. One of my roles at NDACo is to serve as Executive Director of the ND Auditors Association. I understand you have questions regarding the process of reporting election results. I can help step you through the process from the county perspective.

Let's start with when polls close at 7 p.m. Across the state depending on the number of polling locations and the distance they are from the courthouse it can take anywhere from an hour to 2.5 hours to close down the voting location and bring the results to the courthouse. With that said, let's say there is a vote by mail county with a voting location in the courthouse. They could close down the poll and walk steps to hand in the tabulation materials shortly after 7 p.m.

It is required for the inspector and two judges together to bring the seal from the DS200 which is the voting tabulator, the tape with the results printed from the tabulator and the USB with the results from the tabulator. That packet is handed to the Auditor.

The Auditors Office then follows these steps – these steps will not only provide you insight to the results process but also the security measure that are in place to ensure that North Dakota's elections have high integrity. The Auditors Office has two computers used ONLY for the election and results process.

1. The USB with the results is put into a stand-alone computer – which is “hardened” and has many extra security features. It is NOT and has NEVER been connected to the internet. This step is where the info from the tabulator is transferred into the election reporting software to “read” the results.
2. Another employee compares the info in the election reporting software to the totals on the tape from the tabulator to validate that the totals are the same.
3. The file is exported to a single use “RESULTS USB”.
4. The RESULTS USB is put into the ELECTION LAPTOP that is also only used on election day and ONLY has internet access to the central voter file where the information is uploaded to the state. This computer is maintained by ND IT. This is the only piece of election equipment that is connected to the internet. The RESULTS USB is a one time use – because it was used in a computer connected to the internet it is not used again and NEVER goes back into the stand-alone computer.
5. This process to extract and upload the results takes approximately 15 minutes per USB. Several counties will upload info from several DS200 USB's into the election reporting software before doing the export to the RESULTS USB and final upload to the central voter file.

It's important to know that the SOS doesn't go "Live" with the results website until 8 p.m. CT, due to polls closing later in the mountain time zone. Therefore, it could be possible, but probably not very likely that a county could have their results into the courthouse and uploaded prior to the website going "live".

From what I gather from Auditors, most local media rely on the SOS website for the reporting of results. But it is common for stringers from the Associated Press to be in larger counties or counties with big races/issues. As a county loads their election data, they are able to print a report to provide to the media. In some cases, they are provided to the stringer before they are uploaded to the central voter file.

Following the request from this committee to appear here today, I sent a survey to county auditors to gather more information. As today is a holiday, I didn't hear back from many counties. But if this committee would like an update with further clarity, I would be happy to later this week. Here are the questions I asked them to answer in relation to your inquiry.

1. What time do your polls close?
2. On average what time is your first upload of results to the SOS website?
3. What time was your last upload to the SOS website?
4. IF you have AP stringers, when are you providing them the election reporting, before or after your upload to the state?
5. What is the average length of time from when polls close to when you have the DS200 USB totals tape brought in by the inspector/judges?
6. Did you notice a delay from when you uploaded the results to when they were on the SOS website?