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Ensuring fair, accurate elections is a Senate priority

SB 944: Requires audits after every election to ensure accuracy of results

SALEM – The Oregon Senate advanced legislation today that will ensure the accuracy of elections by auditing the results tallied by ballot-counting machines after every election.

[Senate Bill 944](#) – which passed with a 26-2 vote on the Senate floor – requires county clerks to conduct audits after every primary, general and special election. Those can be either hand-count or risk-limiting audits. Which type of audit is left to the individual clerk’s discretion.

“We must ensure that our elections are accurate, transparent and fair,” said Sen. Lew Frederick (D-Portland), who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “This bill ensures more audits happen to make sure the results are correct, and it gives county clerks multiple transparent options for how they will check the results of machine-counted elections.”

County clerks already are required by Oregon statutes to conduct limited hand counts of ballots and compare the results with those produced by the mechanized vote tally system after general elections. If the hand count results yield a difference less than or equal to ½ of a 1 percent, the electronic tally stands. If, after two rounds of hand counts, a difference of greater than half a percent remains, each ballot must be counted by hand and that result ultimately is certified.

Senate Bill 944 takes the current requirements further by requiring audits after every election, instead of just general elections. It gives the risk-limiting audit as an alternative to a hand count. A risk-limiting audit is defined as “a set of procedures to ensure that the risk does not

exceed the risk limit.” These risk-limit audits must be observable to the public and be based on direct visual human examination of elector-marked ballots.

“Nationally, Common Cause supports the use of risk-limiting audits as a key tool to ensure the integrity of our election systems,” Common Cause Oregon Executive Director Kate Titus said. “In fact, there is growing consensus among experts working to ensure election integrity that risk-limiting audits are the most efficient method for detecting and correcting incorrect election outcomes.”

Senate Bill 944 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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