

Board of Elections & Registrations Irwin County Georgia

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Announcement of Election Hand Audit Results

From 9:00am until 6:30pm on May 30th, 2024, the Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations, their staff and volunteers supplied by the Irwin County Republican and Democratic Parties met in order to not only hand-audit selected batches of the Georgia Supreme Court Justice (Pinson) contest as required by law, but to audit all ballots for that contest as well as for 8 additional contests.

9 total contests from all 1902 ballots were tallied and compared to the machine-generated results, and as is the case when performing a monotonous, detail intensive task for a long period of time, human errors came to become a factor. The hand-counts failed to match in 8 of the 9 contests, in most cases by only one vote amounting to less than a tenth of a percent difference, but in the case of one contest in particular, the difference was as high as 13%.

The winners of each contest were the same in every case, and elections office staff performed an intensive review of hand-scanned high resolution ballot images over the course of the following week. These images were scanned in by hand on non-elections system equipment in an open to the public ceremony on May 28th to better comply with new open records requirements passed last month, and those images are available freely to the public upon request for independent counts to be performed, both in 1200dpi original image pdfs and 600dpi searchable pdfs.

After a week of reviewing and hand counting the ballot images and attempting to discover exactly what errors could have accounted for the audit inaccuracies, numerous easy-to-miss errors were discovered that could have led to the auditors' tally discrepancies. These errors ranged from miscounting their own tally marks on the auditors' tally sheets when writing down final counts which led to under-reporting results by exactly 5 or 10 for a batch, accidentally counting a vote for one candidate as a vote for another in a batch, and for the largest errors, completely forgetting to write down the tallied results for one candidate in a contest for a batch, or failing to tally the results for all of one particular contest if it was on the face of the ballot (as it was for nonpartisan and democratic ballots) while only counting results for that contest if it was on the back of the ballot (as it was for republican ballots).

The results of the ballot image review were a true and perfect match to the originally reported results from the elections system.

In order to provide the best combination of timely, thorough and accurate post-election audits for the people of Irwin County, it is imperative that while we continue to go above and beyond state required minimums, that we do not overwhelm our auditors again by auditing too much and causing errors which run counter to our intentions of proving our accuracy and building faith and trust from the people in our endeavors. The Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations will discuss how best to approach auditing the November General Election to higher standards than those set in state law, if possible, due to recently passed changes to O.C.G.A. § 21-2-498 in HB 974.

A sincere thank you to both county parties for providing volunteers to help make this audit a reality and supporting the Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations' efforts to not only comply with all applicable state and federal laws, but to provide excellence, accuracy and transparency for the voters of Irwin County whom we serve.

Ethan Compton
Irwin County Election Supervisor