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From: Michigan Secretary of State <[MISOS@govsubscriptions.michigan.gov](mailto:MISOS@govsubscriptions.michigan.gov)>

To: president <[president@lwvmi.org](mailto:president@lwvmi.org)>

Sent: Thu, Feb 9, 2017 11:59 am

Subject: Bureau of Elections releases Detroit precinct audit findings

# Media Release

From Secretary of State Ruth Johnson



-- For immediate release --

## **Bureau of Elections releases Detroit precinct audit findings**

### **Statewide audit of possible double voting also released**

The Michigan Bureau of Elections today released its [audit findings](#) for 136 Detroit precincts from the Nov. 8, 2016 general election, largely finding that human error, not illegal activity, resulted in mismatches between the number of ballots and recorded voters.

Elections staff found no evidence of pervasive voter fraud or that widespread voting equipment failure led to the imbalances. To correct the problems identified in the audit, Bureau of Elections staff will work collaboratively with city officials to better train Election Day precinct workers beginning with the Aug. 8 city primary election.

The audit found that the precinct imbalances, which did not affect the ability of Detroit residents to cast a ballot and have their vote counted, almost entirely were caused by precinct worker mistakes, specifically:

- Failing to properly use the [electronic poll book](#), which the city began using in 2011, including failing to record voters when they were issued ballots, or when a ballot was spoiled and a voter was issued a new one.
- Leaving counted ballots in the tabulator bin at the end of the night instead of placing all ballots in a sealed container.
- Incorrectly recording or issuing provisional envelope ballots, which are used when a person doesn't appear on the precinct's voter list and needs to provide ID and/or proof of residency. The person votes the provisional ballot, which is then placed in an envelope, and then has six days to show he or she is a properly registered voter.

Elections staff was able to bring 65 precincts into balance and also greatly reduced the extent of mismatches in the remaining precincts. The total number of ballots in question in the remaining precincts was less than 600 out of 250,000 total cast citywide, and Elections staff was able to reduce that number to less than 200. Staff interviewed city employees and

the city's training materials. All audited precincts had a mismatch between ballots and recorded voters of three or more.

As part of a separate, [statewide review](#) of the Nov. 8 election, Bureau of Elections staff discovered 31 individuals who appear to have voted twice — once by absentee ballot and again by voting in person on Election Day — who will be referred to the Michigan Attorney General's Office for criminal investigation. The review is ongoing and more individuals may be referred.

In response to the Detroit audit findings, Secretary of State Ruth Johnson has directed Bureau of Elections staff to work closely with Detroit election workers — similar to how Elections staff assisted city of Flint election workers in 2015 and 2016 after performance issues were identified. Elections staff, alongside city employees, will:

- Make Detroit's election worker training and recruitment programs more effective.
  - The audit report suggests having city employees work in the polls on Election Day to increase the pool of individuals with critical job skills, such as experience working with computers.
  - The city clerk's office has done a commendable job of reaching out to large employers in the city to encourage their employees to work in the polls on Election Day, and similar outreach efforts should be made to the city of Detroit, area colleges, universities and professional associations to further expand the talent pool of qualified workers.
- Elevate the performance of Detroit receiving boards, which are supposed to identify and correct any imbalance issues on election night and ensure that ballot containers are properly sealed, allowing the precinct to be recounted. While some Detroit receiving boards performed well, others did not.
- Improve the understanding of the proper use of electronic poll books, which have increased accuracy and completeness of voter records overall when used correctly. Statewide, 95 percent of precincts use them with those that don't being almost all in small, rural communities.
- Compel county canvassing boards to disclose the number of out-of-balance precincts in the certified canvass reports that are submitted to the Bureau of Elections. Reporting this data will allow Bureau of Elections staff to better identify and correct issues in Michigan's 1,520 cities and townships.
- Require that precinct chairs, who oversee the workers in each precinct, pass a written examination that tests their knowledge of provisional ballot procedures.

Under Johnson's leadership, Michigan has made important election law and administrative reforms that have led to a vast reduction statewide in the number of precincts that can't be reviewed during a recount, including:

- Making receiving boards mandatory.
- Allowing for the first time post-election audits of local clerks by the staff of the Bureau of Elections and a county clerk's office. To date, about 1,400 post-election audits have been performed since 2013. Issues identified during the audits are addressed with the local clerk's office.
- Requiring local clerks to take free continuing education courses developed by the Bureau of Elections to maintain accreditation.
- Greatly expanding training materials available to clerks, including videos and an [online training site](#).

"The city of Detroit and the entire state have made [progress in election administration](#) in recent years, but this audit highlights key areas in need of improvement," Johnson said. "I have directed Bureau of Elections staff to assist city election officials in making needed changes to poll worker training and recruitment efforts. Voters in Detroit and across Michigan deserve no

“As part of our far-reaching anti-fraud efforts, my office will aggressively root out illegal voting. All cases of voter fraud will be reported for criminal investigation and prosecution.”

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**For media questions, please call [Fred Woodhams](#) at [517-373-2520](#).**

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