

SENATE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Anthony W. Petruccelli

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act establishing risk-limiting audits of election results.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Anthony W. Petruccelli

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

First Suffolk and Middlesex

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

AN ACT ESTABLISHING RISK-LIMITING AUDITS OF ELECTION RESULTS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 54 of the general laws, as appearing in the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby
2 amended by inserting after section 109 the following section:-

3

4 Section 109A. Audits of election results

5

6 Purpose. The purpose of this section is to provide a routine cross-check on the accuracy of
7 election night vote totals, both for ballots counted originally by hand and for ballots counted by
8 machine. The audit compares reported preliminary (unofficial) election vote totals for certain
9 election contests to hand-to-eye counts of the same ballots and contests in order to independently
10 confirm election outcomes. In the case that the audit uncovers discrepancies that reach a
11 specified level, a contest-wide hand count is mandated.

12

13 (a) Races to be Audited. Following each primary, general or special election, random hand-
14 count audits shall be conducted for the following offices: US President, US Senator, US
15 Representative, Governor, Secretary of the Commonwealth, State Attorney General and one of
16 the following three state offices chosen by random drawing: Lieutenant Governor, Treasurer and
17 Auditor. All statewide initiative and referenda questions shall also be audited. Races in which
18 only one candidate's name appears on the ballot shall not be audited. The state secretary may
19 require the audit of additional offices when anomalous conditions are observed.

20

21

22 Primaries that take place less than sixty days before a general election may be exempted from the
23 audit at the discretion of the state secretary except when winning candidates are separated by less
24 than 7% of the vote share from the nearest losing candidates.

25

26 (b) Selection of precincts to be audited. Statewide races shall be selected from a pool including
27 all precincts in the state. US House races shall be selected from a pool including all precincts in
28 a single congressional district. The precincts to be audited shall be chosen using a manual,
29 publicly verifiable, non-computerized random selection process. The time and place of such
30 random drawing shall be publicly noticed at least ten days in advance of the election. The
31 drawing shall be open to one observer representing each candidate or question that may be
32 audited, who shall be positioned where s/he can meaningfully observe the process, and shall be
33 open to the public. The drawing shall take place as soon as possible after the close of the polls
34 but after preliminary results have been reported. The cities, towns and precincts selected shall

35 be announced aloud at the time of the drawing and recorded in the order they are selected. This
36 information shall be published on the website of the state secretary as soon as possible but not
37 later than (ten) hours after the drawing.

38

39 (c) Report of preliminary results prior to random drawing. A written report of preliminary
40 election tallies, excluding unprocessed ballots such as provisional and late absentee ballots, must
41 be provided by the municipality to members of the public and to the state secretary before the
42 selection of the precincts for the audit as provided in paragraph (b.) The preliminary unofficial
43 results shall be immediately transmitted to the state secretary, as provided for in Ch 54 Section
44 105, who shall calculate from them the preliminary margins of victory in order to commence the
45 audit and shall make public the margins of victory for auditable races and the precinct data for all
46 municipalities.

47

48 (d) Time and place of the audit. Each municipality shall designate in advance the location where
49 they will conduct an audit should they be selected for an audit in the random drawing. The audit
50 shall commence no later than 24 hours following the drawing.

51

52 (e) Audit procedures.

53

54 Audits shall be conducted publicly in a similar manner to the procedures for counting ballots in
55 Section 105 of Chapter 54. In addition, audits shall follow these procedures: 1) each precinct

56 audit will be presided over by two registrars of voters from the two leading political parties and
57 shall examine such election records as they deem necessary to meaningfully compare reported
58 vote totals with the vote totals from the audited paper ballots, including but not limited to spoiled
59 and unused ballots, absentee ballots, and the poll register; 2) observers representing candidates
60 and ballot questions shall be positioned where they can clearly and comfortably observe those
61 who count the votes and record the vote totals; 3) upon commencing an audit of its contents the
62 registrars shall examine the signatures and the seals securing ballot containers before they are
63 opened and compare them to the signatures and seal numbers recorded after close of polls in the
64 Precinct Log described in paragraph (f) 3 of this section and determine whether either have been
65 disturbed and if so shall record this in the Precinct Log; 4) audit personnel shall count and
66 record the total number of ballots cast at the precinct on Election Day and count the total votes,
67 blank votes, over-votes and total write-ins for each candidate and the Yes and No votes and
68 blanks for each ballot question on those ballots and record such on official forms provided by the
69 state secretary; 5) voter intent shall be the standard for counting votes; 6) in jurisdictions where
70 votes were counted initially by an electronic voting system, an additional record shall be kept of
71 the number of votes for which voter intent is discernable but ballots were not marked according
72 to the instructions provided to the voters under Section 48 of Chapter 54; 7) audit personnel shall
73 compare the information on the signed machine tally slips produced at the precinct at close of
74 polls to the vote totals report submitted to the state secretary as required in Section 105 of
75 Chapter 54 and shall record discrepancies, if any, on the appropriate audit form ; 8) all the
76 ballots shall be enclosed in their proper envelopes or containers when they have been counted
77 and each envelope or container shall be sealed with a secure numbered seal provided therefore;
78 9) at least three members of the audit team shall sign and date an affixed seal designed so that it

79 cannot be removed without damaging the signatures, shall record the name of the city or town,
80 ward, if any, and precinct thereon.

81

82 (f) Precinct Log. A log book shall be maintained by hand for each precinct in which shall be
83 recorded various items pertaining to elections and to their audits, if any. Items to be recorded
84 therein include: 1) the model and serial numbers of all voting and counting devices used, if any,
85 2) the numbers printed on the seals used to close containers on election night, 3) the numbers
86 printed on seals used to close containers after the audit, as set forth in paragraph (e) 3 of this
87 section, 4) the names and signatures of those signing seals and tally slips on election night, 5) the
88 names and signatures of those signing seals and tally slips after the audit, 6) any problems or
89 anomalies encountered during the audit, and 7) any protests made by those conducting the audit
90 or any citizen or candidate observer present pertaining to the conduct of the audit along with the
91 names and contact information of such persons.

92

93 The Log shall be kept in a secure location but shall be available for public inspection under the
94 supervision of the municipal clerk.

95

96 (g) Reporting the model of voting devices. Two officials from each precinct shall record the
97 model and serial number of all voting and counting devices used, if any, in the Precinct Log and
98 shall sign the log.

99

100 (h) Cost. The cost of the audits is the responsibility of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
101 excluding the salaries of city and town employees for normal hours of work.

102

103 (i) Sequential selection of precincts to count for different statewide contests.

104 The precincts chosen to audit statewide races or ballot questions shall be recorded in the order in
105 which they are drawn. The same sequence of randomly selected precincts may be used for all
106 statewide contests. The minimum number of precincts that must be audited for each contest will
107 vary according to the contest-wide margin of victory. At the discretion of the state secretary,
108 several contests may be grouped together and audited according to the highest number of picks
109 required by any contest within that group.

110

111 (j) Calculation of the percentage margin of victory for each contest.

112 The margin of victory percentage shall be calculated contest-wide for each audited contest by
113 dividing the difference between the total numbers of votes received by the two leading
114 candidates or ballot positions, by the total number of ballots cast in all the precincts in which the
115 audited contest appeared on the ballot.

116

117 (k) The method for random selection of precincts to be audited.

118

119 1. The audit shall follow a protocol whereby, for each audited race or ballot question, the chance
120 that a precinct will be selected for inclusion in the random sample shall be proportional to the
121 number of ballots cast therein, provided however, that any precinct picked more than once need
122 only be audited once for any particular contest. If, prior to the start of the random selection
123 process, the actual precinct-level turnout data cannot be obtained from all precincts in which an
124 audited contest appeared on the ballot, then, the numbers of active registered voters in all such
125 precincts, as of a recent specified date, may be used in lieu thereof, to determine the chance of
126 each precinct being selected.

127

128 2. For any audited statewide offices or ballot questions the audit shall be designed and
129 implemented to provide approximately a 99% chance that a hand recount of 100% of the ballots
130 will occur whenever such a recount would reverse the preliminary outcome reported by the
131 voting system.

132

133 3. For each election held for United States Representative, the audit shall be designed and
134 implemented to provide approximately a 90% chance that a hand recount of 100% of the ballots
135 will occur whenever such a recount would reverse the preliminary outcome reported by the
136 voting system.

137

138 4. Any procedures implemented by the state secretary to achieve the probability required by (2)
139 and (3) of this subsection shall assume that within any precinct, at least 25% of the total votes

140 cast may not have been counted for the same candidate or ballot position for which they would
141 be counted in a 100% hand-to-eye recount.

142

143 5. Not less than ten of the precincts in the Commonwealth shall be selected randomly for audits
144 of statewide contests nor shall less than five precincts in each Congressional District be selected
145 randomly for audits of US House races.

146

147 6. A full statewide hand-count shall be conducted for any audited statewide contest with a
148 margin of victory of one quarter of one per cent or less. A full contest-wide hand-count shall be
149 conducted for any US House race with a margin of victory of one half of one per cent or less.

150

151 7. In consultation with persons with documented expertise in statistical protocols for election
152 auditing, the state secretary shall develop procedures which shall include the use of mathematical
153 formula/e and a table or tables pursuant to the requirements of paragraphs (2-6) of this
154 subsection showing the minimum number of precincts to be picked for various margins of
155 victory, the discrepancies that would trigger further hand counts, the number of such additional
156 precincts picks that would be needed if further hand counts are required, and the level of
157 discrepancies that would trigger a full contest-wide hand count of a race. Written standards and
158 procedures for the audit as well as tables and formulae shall be published ninety days in advance
159 of an election and shall be subject to initial public comment and periodic review.

160

161 8) The state secretary, in consultation with the expert or experts referred to in the preceding
162 paragraph, may substitute another method of random selection if it is at least as transparent as the
163 one described herein and at least as effective in ensuring that, pursuant to paragraphs (2) and (3)
164 of this subsection, a 100% hand recount will occur whenever such a recount would reverse the
165 preliminary outcome reported by the voting system

166

167 (l) Audit report: Comparison of precinct audit results to original reported results.

168 Following completion of the audit, the registrars of voters shall record in adjacent columns or
169 rows on official audit report forms provided by the state secretary 1) the unofficial tallies
170 reported to the state secretary as required by Section 105 of Chapter 54, and 2) the audit tallies
171 for the same ballots counted in item (1) above, as recorded on the official audit forms provided
172 for in paragraph (e)(4). 3) The registrars shall then compare these figures for discrepancies and
173 shall note any in a third adjacent column and 4) shall record in a fourth adjacent column the
174 number of votes for each race for which voter intent is discernable but that are not marked by the
175 voter according to the instructions provided to the voters under Section 48 of Chapter 54, that
176 were identified under (e) (6) of this section, in order to assist with an analysis of discrepancies, if
177 any.

178

179 (m) Reporting audit results. The registrars shall submit the official audit form or forms described
180 in paragraph (l) of this section to the state secretary who shall make public the information in
181 these reports as soon as practicable thereafter in both human- and machine-readable formats,
182 such as a spreadsheet or comma-separated-value (CSV) file.

183

184 (n) Comparison of contest-wide audit sample to preliminary contest-wide results. Upon receipt
185 of the results of the manual audit count from the audited precincts, the state secretary shall
186 calculate the total number of votes for each candidate and ballot question as recorded in the
187 manual audit count and shall compare the resulting totals to the sum of the originally reported
188 preliminary votes submitted under Ch. 54 Sec 105 for each candidate and ballot question in the
189 audited precincts.

190

191 (o) Discrepancies that trigger further hand counts. Whenever discrepancies between the
192 preliminary unofficial results and the audit sample reach a certain critical threshold, further hand
193 counts shall be conducted as prescribed in the tables required by paragraph (k) 7 of this section.
194 If, after one or more expansions of the audit sample, discrepancies in the expanded audit indicate
195 a substantial possibility of a different prevailing candidate or outcome, either passage or defeat,
196 than the outcome originally reported in the initial election count, a complete hand count of all
197 ballots cast on which the above contest or contests appeared shall be conducted in coordination
198 with requirements for recounts and results reported within sufficient time to meet state and
199 federal election deadlines for certification.

200

201 (p) Vote of record. If there is a discrepancy between a manual count and originally reported
202 tallies, where the original results were obtained using electronic equipment, the manual count of
203 the official paper ballots shall be the official vote of record.

204

205 (q) Archiving audit results. The results of audits and hand-counts, as well as the corresponding
206 data for the originally reported tallies, shall be made publicly available on a precinct-by-precinct
207 basis both in hardcopy and in electronic file format, and shall be archived for at least ten years in
208 order to facilitate research and to provide for continuous improvement of election procedures.

209

210 (r) Analysis of discrepancies. Discrepancies between the hand-counted audit and the original
211 vote tally shall be analyzed to ascertain their cause. The state secretary shall oversee the analysis
212 and shall publish and make available online the findings within 180 days.

213

214 (s) Analyzing discrepancies by machine model. When a manual audit count is conducted, the
215 sum of the votes from each audited precinct for each candidate and ballot question shall be
216 calculated for each model of electronic or mechanical voting or counting device and compared to
217 the sum of the originally reported tallies from those machines in the audited precincts.

218 Whenever the difference between the hand-counted audit and the originally reported tally is
219 more than one percent for any particular machine model, the discrepancy between the hand-
220 counted audit and the original vote tally shall be analyzed to ascertain the cause of the
221 discrepancy. The state secretary shall oversee the analysis and shall publish and make available
222 online the findings within 180 days.

223

224 (t) Training for audit personnel. Training for audit personnel shall be based on uniform written
225 and visual training materials issued by the State Secretary.

226

227 (u) Candidates. Candidates in races that may potentially be audited must be informed of this fact
228 at least 3 days before the election so that they may have observers present at the audit if they
229 choose.

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