



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 572 - Election Law - Postelection Tabulation Audits - Risk-Limiting Audits

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Nancy Soreng – President

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The League of Women Voters supports measures that ensure the accurate counting of all votes and that protect the integrity of our elections. Risk-limiting audits can be a useful tool in this effort and are well worth funding.

HB 572 would replace certain existing requirements for the auditing of election systems with a more modern, statistically proven risk-limiting audit (RLA). Colorado and Rhode Island already require risk-limiting audits, and other states have implemented pilot RLA projects in selected jurisdictions.

Risk-limiting audits are more efficient than the current mandate to audit a fixed percentage of ballots. Instead, they only sample as many voter-verified paper ballots as are necessary according to the margin of victory in each contest. At least one statewide contest must be audited this way, plus at least one local contest in each county. Pre-determined guidelines for expanding the audit, up to a full recount if necessary, preclude the need for making arbitrary, case-by-case decisions.

Another advantage of HB 572 is that it would require risk-limiting audits to be completed before the election is certified, rather than up to 120 days after the election. This rapid turnaround will help reassure candidates and voters that ballots were counted correctly.

Finally, HB 572 proposes a transparent process for conducting the audits and posting a report on the State Board of Elections website describing the process and the results. These measures will help maintain public confidence in the integrity of Maryland's elections.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 572.