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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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**Testimony in Support of HB426: Election Law - Postelection Tabulation Audits -
Risk-Limiting Audits
February 4, 2025**

Madam Chair Atterbeary and distinguished members of the Ways & Means Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 426**, to require risk-limiting audits (RLAs) for our elections. This legislation is about election integrity. Nothing matters more to our democracy than free and fair elections AND citizens' belief that our elections are free and fair.

RLAs are the *gold standard* for ballot auditing because it uses statistical means to confirm election results and takes full advantage of paper ballots. RLAs are recommended by election experts as the preferred way to verify election outcomes and to confirm that results have not been corrupted by hacking. RLAs manually examine randomly chosen individual paper ballots or batches of paper ballots until there is sufficiently strong evidence that a full hand count would confirm the electronic tabulation, or until there has been a full hand count.

RLAs are far superior to our current auditing procedures. Only an RLA can correct a wrong election outcome and ensure that the proper winners are certified. In contrast, our current automated software audit cannot correct a wrong election outcome because it relies on recounting potentially inaccurate ballot images rather than actual physical ballots. Also, our current manual audit is not completed until months after the election results are certified. Furthermore, our current audit is only used to gauge the performance of the voting system and not to correct any problems with our election results.

I'd like to share what the National Academy of Sciences has to say about the need for RLAs. They say: "the design and development of current computer systems, no matter how well constructed, cannot anticipate and prevent all the possible means of attack". They further say, "There is no realistic mechanism to fully secure vote casting and tabulation computer systems from cyber threats." Therefore, manual auditing is necessary.

This bill has passed several times in the House of Delegates and I believe this is the year it can pass in the State Senate.

I urge a favorable report on **House Bill 426**. Thank you.

What is a Risk-Limiting Audit?





VerifiedVoting

What is a Risk-Limiting Audit?







A risk-limiting audit (RLA) is a type of post-election audit that **gives the public justified confidence in election outcomes**. RLAs are designed as a rigorous, efficient tool for election officials to check reported election outcomes against voters' ballots. An RLA can stop as soon as it finds strong evidence to support the reported outcome. Or, if the reported outcome was incorrect because ballots were miscounted, an RLA is very likely to lead to a full hand count that corrects the outcome before the election results are certified.

What do best-practice risk-limiting audits require?

-  Paper ballots preferably marked by hand, with ballot marking devices for those who need or prefer to use them (*voter-verified paper ballots*)
-  Reliable records of how and where ballots are stored (*ballot manifests*)
-  Rigorous *ballot accounting* and properly maintained *chain of custody* of the ballots
-  Transparency and observability throughout the auditing process, including the timely publication of the audit outcome

How are RLAs different from other audits or recounts?

-  RLAs are not focused on checking individual districts or machines. They are designed to audit *contest* results by looking at a sample of ballots from across all ballots validly cast in that contest.
-  Unlike traditional tabulation audits, RLAs are designed to provide high assurance of correct election outcomes even in close contests.
-  Unlike procedures that simply rescan and retabulate ballots, RLAs examine paper ballots hand-to-eye to ensure that machine-tabulated results align with the paper ballots.
-  RLAs allow jurisdictions to save time and resources by checking more ballots when needed in close contests, and fewer ballots in contests with wider margins. Even in close contests, the risk limit can usually be achieved without a full hand count.

How is an RLA conducted?

-  Our handy [Flowchart for Conducting Risk-Limiting Audits](#) is included on the next page.

A Verified Voting *flowchart* for conducting

Risk-Limiting Audits

Conduct Elections
with voter-verified
and machine-scanned
paper ballots



**Store, organize,
and catalog
paper ballots**
for later retrieval

**Identify contest(s) to
be audited according
to state law and rule**



**Pull sampled
paper ballots,
examine,
and record
information**



**Select a
scientific random
sample of ballots**
for hand auditing



**Does the information from the sampled
paper ballots give enough evidence to
support the reported outcome(s)?**

YES

Voters can have
confidence in
reported outcome!



For more info, contact
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NO

More ballots are
needed to provide
evidence, up to and
including a full hand
count of all validly
cast ballots