

# STATE BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

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## NEWS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release*

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### **SBEC Completes its Statutorily required Statewide Election Audit of the March 2024 Preferential Primary.**

The Arkansas State Board of Election Commissioners are required by statute to complete a post-election audit of randomly selected counties. The State Board staff, with assistance of other local election officials, have completed their audit of the March 2024 Preferential Primary election. The Report was prepared and provided to the State Board for their review and adoption during the SBEC's August 28, 2024, meeting. The purpose of the State Board audit is to "ensure the integrity and accuracy of the voting process." A.C.A. § 7-4-121(a)(1).

The 2024 Preferential Primary Audit involved randomly selecting fifteen (15) counties from across the state. The counties randomly selected by the SBEC Board for the Primary election were Conway, Drew, Fulton, Garland, Lee, Madison, Mississippi, Montgomery, Ouachita, Saline, Scott, Searcy, Sharp, Van Buren and Yell. The State Board established a goal to audit at least 5% of the ballots cast in the Preferential Primary statewide. The audit was completed by hand-counting 28,241 ballots from the fifteen (15) randomly selected counties, which represents 7.82% of all ballots cast in the state during the Preferential Primary.

Fourteen (14) counties exclusively use electronic voting equipment for their voting process. The audit confirmed the results were 100% accurate. The Audit team randomly selected ballot boxes and randomly selected races to audit. The audit process involved unsealing the ballot boxes and comparing the English characters of the candidate and counting the number of ballots cast for each candidate. That hand-counted total is compared to the electronic voting tabulator results to ensure that the results accurately reflected the ballots processed by that electronic vote tabulator. These fourteen (14) counties were 100% accurate.

Searcy County opted to conduct a hand-marked and hand-counted election. Searcy County did not utilize the electronic voting tabulator results part of their election certification or reconciliation process for certifying the results of the election. SBEC auditors utilized the certified results of a randomly selected race for its audit testing. During the audit several discrepancies were found that could not be reconciled by the SBEC team. The audit discovered several ballots that should have been counted as part of the results, but which were not included in the certified totals. Further, the audit identified a math error on a tabulation page, where a reported total was not supported by the ballots cast for that polling location. The differences and discrepancies, however, did not alter the outcome of the election because the margins were greater than the ballot counting discrepancies.

The result of the audit shows that counties utilizing voting equipment had confirmed 100% accurate results. The county that chose to utilize a hand-count process did not achieve 100% results and identified ballots that it failed to count.

For more details regarding the audit, go to:

[https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/elections/2024\\_Preferential\\_Primary\\_Audit\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/elections/2024_Preferential_Primary_Audit_Report_Final.pdf).