



American Statistical Association

Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics

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November 8, 2012

Philip Stark
Chair, Risk-Limiting Audits Working Group
c/o Office of the Chair, Department of Statistics
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720-3860

Dear Professor Stark,

I write to commend and support the practical guidance in the white paper, "[Risk-Limiting Post-Election Audits: Why and How](#)," prepared by the Risk-Limiting Audits Working Group.

As you know, the board of directors for the American Statistical Association—the world's largest professional society of statisticians—has actively promoted electoral integrity through election auditing, and risk-limiting audits in particular. In 2008 the ASA Board made a [statement](#) that said, "All processes and data of U.S. elections should be subject to statistically sound, continuous-quality monitoring and improvement." Later that year, the Board endorsed [Principles and Best Practices for Post-Election Audits](#). In 2010, the Board issued a [statement on risk-limiting post-election audits](#) recommending that "risk-limiting audits be routinely conducted and reported in all federal, most statewide, and at least a sampling of other governmental election contests."

In general, post-election audits—the comparison of hand counts of randomly selected ballots with machine tallies—help judge whether a full hand count would show the same winners, thereby promoting trust in our elections. As explained in the ASA Board's 2010 statement, "risk-limiting" audits have the efficiency advantage over "fixed-percentage" audits of focusing resources where needed. When a machine-count outcome is correct, a risk-limiting audit often can confirm the result after examining only a small fraction of the ballots cast. Moreover, unlike other auditing methods, a risk-limiting audit guarantees a large probability of correcting the result if the result is wrong. In other words, risk-limiting audits provide objective, scientific evidence that, when all is done, the election results are right.

By including the perspectives of election officials, researchers, and election advocates, the white paper provides an important and practical foundation for writing legislation and regulations for risk-limiting audits. I believe that legislators, legislative aides, state and local election officials, and election integrity advocates should read your paper and follow its guidance in implementing risk-limiting audits. As the paper illustrates, there is a method for risk-limiting audits suitable for every jurisdiction that has a paper trail: comparison audits or ballot-polling audits.

Thank you for this service to election integrity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert N. Rodriguez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'R' at the beginning.

Robert N. Rodriguez, PhD
President, American Statistical Association