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Audit confirms accuracy of Nebraska election equipment

LINCOLN – Sample hand counts of results from the November 2010 general election show that Nebraska's voting-tabulation equipment is extremely accurate, according to Secretary of State John Gale.

Gale ordered an audit of results in 33 randomly-selected precincts (2 percent of the state's total) to test the accuracy of the equipment. A total of 7,815 ballots were hand counted in three contests – U.S. House of Representatives, a community college race and a county race.

In 30 of the 33 precincts, there were no discrepancies between the hand counts and the machine counts.

Two precincts had a change in one ballot each due to the fact that one race on each ballot had been marked too lightly for the machines to count. Another precinct had changes because one ballot should have been rejected because it wasn't initialed by election officials.

Nebraska uses paper ballots to vote, and the ballots are counted by optical-scanning equipment.

"Out of a total of 7,815 ballots hand counted for the audit, only three ballots had errors, including one ballot that should have been rejected and never counted," Gale said. "This minuscule error rate confirms our confidence in our voting-tabulation equipment."

Studies of elections have shown that optical-scanning equipment produces more accurate results than hand counts.

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