The State of Texas

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Robert S. Howden
Secretary of State

ELECTION ADVISORY
NO. 2026-32

To: All Election Officials

From: Christina Adkins, Director of Elections CHA

Date: November 4, 2026

RE: Post-Election Hand Count Audit after the November 3, 2026 General Election

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Pursuant to Section 127.201(a) of the Texas Election Code (the "Code"), the general custodian of election records in an election in which an electronic voting system is used must conduct a Post-Election Hand Count Audit. Additional information and detailed procedures regarding the Post-Election Hand Count Audit are available in Election Advisory No. 2025-21 and the Post-Election Hand Count Audit Guide.

The Post-Election Hand Count Audit applies to election day, early voting in-person and early voting by mail ballots.

The Post-Election Hand Count Audit is required for all counties that automatically tabulate their ballots using an optical/digital scanner. Optical/digital scanners are either precinct ballot counters or central scanners. Therefore, entities that hand counted their ballots are not authorized to conduct the Post-Election Hand Count Audit. Tex. Elec. Code § 127.201(a), (g).

Procedures for the November 3, 2026 General Election

For the November 3, 2026 General Election, the Secretary of State is required to select a minimum of three (3) election day polling locations and three (3) early voting polling locations or one percent (1%) of the election day polling locations and one percent (1%) of the early voting polling locations—whichever is greater—for the Post-Election Hand Count Audit. Tex. Elec. Code § 127.201(b). In addition, a minimum of three (3) precincts or one percent (1%) of the precincts in which a ballot by mail was cast—whichever is greater—must be selected for the Post-Election Hand Count Audit.

Counting of election day and early voting ballots will be done by polling location for in person voting, and ballots by mail will be counted by precinct. This provision applies to counties that conduct precinct-based voting or that participate in the Countywide Polling Place Program.

Time for Starting the Post-Election Hand Count Audit

As a reminder, the state will be conducting the first ever statewide Risk-Limiting Audit after the November 3, 2026 election. The Risk-Limiting Audit and the Post-Election Hand Count Audit are two different types of post-election audits that are legally and conceptually distinct.

While the deadline to begin the Post-Election Hand Count Audit is normally 72 hours after the time that the polls close on election day, that deadline is extended for this election due to the fact that the November 3, 2026 General Election will be the first election in which a statewide risk-limiting audit is conducted.

Under Section 127.201(b-2) of the Election Code, in an election in which a statewide risk-limiting audit is conducted, the deadline to begin the Post-Election Hand Count Audit is the first business day after the Secretary of State has certified the completion of the Risk-Limiting Audit.

The Risk-Limiting Audit is scheduled to begin on Thursday, November 19, 2026, and will continue until it is completed. Our office will provide additional information about the deadline to begin the Post-Election Hand Count Audit after the Risk-Limiting Audit is completed.

For more information about the Risk-Limiting Audit, please review Advisory 2026-30.

Selection of Offices for November 3, 2026 General Election

The Secretary of State must also select no more than three (3) races to be counted for the Post-Election Hand Count Audit. For the November 3, 2026 General Election, the three (3) offices selected by the Secretary of State are:

- **United States Senator;**
- **Chief Justice, Supreme Court; and**
- **One other contested race selected by the general custodian of election records**

Please note that the online portal for county notification and submission of the Post-Election Hand Count Audit for the November 3, 2026 General Election will NOT be used. Procedures for conducting the Post-Election Hand Count Audit and submission of the results are indicated below.

Selection of Polling Locations for Early Voting, Election Day and Early Voting Ballot by Mail Precincts

The randomly selected early voting polling locations, election day polling locations, and precincts for ballots by mail for each county are included in the attached spreadsheet. If you have any

questions related to polling location or precinct selections, please contact our office for additional assistance.

Designation of Early Voting Ballot Board

The general custodian of election records will designate members of the Early Voting Ballot Board to perform the Post-Election Hand Count Audit under the direction of the custodian. If one or more members of the Early Voting Ballot Board are unable to serve, then additional members may be appointed under the procedures outlined in Section 87.002(c) of the Election Code.

Opening Ballot Box

You are not required to petition a district judge for permission to retrieve the ballots, since this is a procedure that is required by law. At the time you have designated to begin the Post-Election Hand Count Audit, you should arrange access to the ballots for the selected polling locations and precincts. Following the Post-Election Hand Count Audit, all election material shall be re-secured and returned to the appropriate authority.

Optional Selection of Additional Polling Locations and/or Precincts

Section 127.201(b-3) of the Election Code permits the general custodian of election records to select additional early voting and election day polling locations and/or ballot by mail precincts to be included in the Post-Election Hand Count Audit. The general custodian may select up to three (3) additional polling locations for early voting, three (3) additional polling locations for election day, and three (3) additional precincts for ballots by mail through a random selection process, by selecting the locations and precincts with the highest turnout, or by using a combination of these two methods. The general custodian may also select additional locations where there are documented discrepancies in the reconciliation paperwork for those locations.

For additional information regarding the selection of additional polling locations and/or precincts, please see Election Advisory No. 2025-21 and the Post-Election Hand Count Audit Guide.

Completion of the Post-Election Hand Count Audit

Because there is a statewide Risk-Limiting Audit occurring this election, the deadline to complete the Post-Election Hand Count Audit is extended to the 30th day after election day (Thursday, December 3, 3026) or by a later deadline certified by our office after the Risk-Limiting Audit is completed. The Secretary of State will certify the exact deadline to complete the Post-Election Hand Count Audit after the Risk-Limiting Audit is complete.

Submission of Results

To report your Post-Election Hand Count Audit results, complete the spreadsheet provided by the Secretary of State which was included with the email sent to the county. Please also submit

the first page of the completed and signed Summary and Certification of Post-Election Hand Count Audit Results (Form 14-11) and email it back to our office at elections@sos.texas.gov. Our office will review the submitted results and may reach out to your county for additional information or clarification, as needed.

Results of the Post-Election Hand Count Audit must also be posted on the county's website in the same location where election returns and results are posted. Results must be emailed to our office and posted on the county's website no later than the third day after the completion of the Post-Election Hand Count Audit. (Sec. 127.201(e)).

Please contact the Secretary of State's Office at elections@sos.texas.gov or 1-800-252-8683 if you have any questions in conducting your Post-Election Hand Count Audit or if you experience any problems entering your data.

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