

My name is Tessa Marquis. I have volunteered as an observer for three Post-Election Audits, one in 2008 and two which took place in 2009 in two separate towns.

I have found that the Registrars of Voters, the City Clerks, and the people who assisted in the ballot recounts were of high integrity, conscientious, and serious about the integrity of the vote. In all three Audits my initial discussions with the Registrars have focused on reassuring them that the Audit is not a test of their abilities, but an Audit of the system. **Concerns** about the cost of these Audits – not usually budgeted by their towns – are addressed in other testimony by Luther Weeks.

My testimony is more experiential in nature. I found that the Registrars were very eager to find a methodology for the Audit. Mostly located in small rooms, sometimes in basement areas, in one case sharing one computer between 4 people, some of these Registrars didn't have the funding left to attend training sessions, or stated that the training was inadequate.

Initially suspicious of the Audit, they were consistently professional and serious about the process. They were pleased when I showed them a copy of the Frequently Asked Questions writeup that I received from the Connecticut Citizen Election Audit Coalition, and became more relaxed when I openly showed them my Post-Election Audit Forms.

In all three Audits there was frustration which can be traced to a lack of training in a simple methodology for the Audit. Some Registrars took it upon themselves to create a counting format (for example) which involved scoring sheets similar to those used in bowling alleys. Each Audit involved a discussion and re-engineering of sorting procedure. There is confusion about whether Absentee Ballots are incorporated into the Audit. This should be systematized and not a matter of discussion while conducting the Audit. One simplified and universal process would solve all these problems and cut the time of the Audit by one or two hours.

There are custody issues, outlined elsewhere, that come down to things like letting pizza delivery people into the Audit room or changing rooms in mid-Audit to accommodate other meetings scheduled for the room and more serious ones where the ballots are not stored properly.

Counting uncontested races is a waste of time, although it is necessary if the intent is to check the accuracy of the machines. Perhaps uncontested races could be exempted from the Audit and other contests chosen for audit.

Again, the important take-away for me is that the Registrars are dedicated, conscientious, upstanding administrators who have the best intentions. We need to continue to improve the process to make it as easy as possible for them to conduct the hand count Audit. It is a pleasure to participate in the Audits and I commend the Connecticut Citizen Election Audit Coalition – The League of Women Voters, Connecticut Common Cause, Connecticut Citizen Action Group and CT Voters Count.org – for the work they are doing in this matter.

Incidentally, one of the other Audit volunteers told me about an election she observed in Croatia where someone literally tried to run away with the ballot box.

I highly recommend that the audit continue to be a manual count of the paper ballots. Robert Kennedy, Jr and BBC Investigative Journalist Greg Palast are adamant about concerns of voter suppression and counting the votes that are submitted. In their work entitled “Steal Back Your Vote” they state “You can have all the paper ballots in the world, but if you don’t demand to look at them, publicly, in a recount, you might as well mark them with invisible ink.”

After every Audit I have thanked the Coalition for allowing me the opportunity to participate in the election process, to ensure the integrity of the vote, just as I thank the members of this committee for their dedication to the mainstay of our Democracy.

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